



LEGEND OF THE SUPREME SOLDIER

BOOK 03

Fang Xiang

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Legend of the Supreme Soldier

(师士传说)

by

Fang Xiang

(方想)

Synopsis

Ye Chong was a denizen of Trash Planet-12. On one fateful day, he discovered a treasure that would forever alter his destiny from a pile of junk – Mu Shang, an unknown machine with artificial intelligence and a lost memory. Together, they venture into the vast galaxy as the isolated “caveman” that was Ye Chong began absorbing all sorts of knowledge and meeting people from all walks of life. He gradually discovers more and more about his own mysterious past as well as his partner’s. Read to find out more!

Acknowledgement

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English Translation by [Qidian International](#)

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Chapter 201: As You Are Human

Two mechs stood against each other.

Wei Yuan's eyes shone like a pair of diamonds. The person who saved his life before could probably be YC but as said, it was merely a slight probability. Well, as long as he was indeed YC, Wei Yuan was confident enough to identify the typical YC style in the movements.

So he was really an expert in mechs... Rui Bing was mesmerized as she watched the man climbed into the Han Jia's cabin. Rui Su, her sister once told her that Ye Chong was a professional in mech modification. She was not convinced by that overstatement since Ye Chong could not possibly be wielding an iron fist and an iron wrench at the same time.

Perhaps... mech could be fun... Rui Bing wondered.

The practitioners had their eyes wide open, "This is the real deal guys, not those flashy, overdone mech dancing with kicks you would see on Virtual World." This colosseum was intended for mech combat training. One could say there was never any other better place for mech combats to take place.

The staring contest lasted for 5 seconds and Ye Chong launched an attack, with an aim of annihilating the foe and leaving this place as soon as possible. Lan Yixing, the master of September Dojo had died and probably in the following months, even years people would have their attention on the dojo itself. Ye Chong did not desire being under the spotlight. It was no longer the place he could stay. Hence, his next move would be finding a new spot to hide while waiting for Wang Weixing to return.

First things first, to finish this mech in front of him.

Ye Chong used Double Curved Steps! Two converging curves of different sizes formed a peculiar track! Ye Chong had become

unpredictable.

Wei Yuan screamed as he recognized that strange step from the mech. He tried mimicking the movements before and exercise of that steps had just determined the fact that this man, slightly older than Wei Yuan, was YC himself. He pulled his eyes open, dreadfully fearing that he would miss out any epic part of the show.

Such a ghostly step was absolutely foreign to Zheng Zhongxing, that he was forced to readjust his direction from time to time while maintaining a tiny distance away, backing off slowly with the arms at the chest - the standard posture for combats.

More like the standard posture for combats to death, Ye Chong commented. Combats are naturally different between mechs and between men. One does not simply incorporated tricks from one to another. Unlike Zheng Zhongxing who committed such mistake, Ye Chong's techniques were all from practices, sharpened by his battle experience, which he believed to be slightly inferior to the aces at Black Coves, well he could still be considered as a master in combats in this field.

Han Jia confronted the foe, as it inched forward. Ye Chong got to eliminate the issue as soon as possible. He did not have the leisure to "compete" with Zheng Zhongxing to find out who the master truly was between them. Time was money. Plus that set of steps he performed was enough to disrupt the balance of the foe, though only for a second, which was negligible to normal expert yet sufficiently fatal to the expert of experts like Ye Chong.

Whenever a balance is disrupted, it always takes time to recover. And in that brief time frame, in the eyes of the experts, it would be the golden opportunity.

Ye Chong charged towards the foe right when the balance was lost. A distance of 300 meters was a joke to mechs, especially exceptionally mobile models like Han Jia with superior engines.

And that was not in Zheng Zhongxing's script apparently.

Zheng Zhongxing responded hectically towards Ye Chong's odd piloting and Han Jia's capabilities, as he finally came to understand that, he encountered the real deal this time.

30 meters away, now! A Thomas's Spin from Ye Chong, as he spun like a whirlwind all the way to Zheng Zhongxing's side.

The foe was in absolute confusion. Such speed, in such short frame of time, while being so careful, I still could not react in time. That had to be at least Mach 8. He could not name anyone who could perform a Thomas's Spin while doing a Double Step in split seconds. That was inhuman! Zheng Zhongxing could feel his chest freezing. He did not recognize the sophisticated Double Curved Step, he thought it was a mere Double Step.

Ye Chong's calmness during battle always gave him a feeling of being dipped in the water of thoughts, chilly, glassy, no ripple, no fear.

His cold eyes reflected the panicked foe, he placed his hands over the control panel then a stack of afterimages covered the interface. Without hesitation, he inputted a set of command in the first second. Execution! Han Jia lowered its feet, dented to the ground and flung itself towards Zheng Zhongxing at a frightening speed, above the ground by 10 centimeters or less.

Zheng Zhongxing reacted like a scalded cat as his eyes, cloaked with disbelief when he saw that mech coming like a bullet. The sudden direction change this close was something he could do nothing on. And only Wei Yuan could identify that fearsomeness of the move among the crowd, "Wicked cool," he praised.

The silhouette of Han Jia enlarged drastically in his eyes. Ye Chong could also see the name branded on the main body of his foe. The balance had been utterly disrupted.

Han Jia was at extremespeed in a split of a second and one could

only see Han Jia raising its body, crushing the waist of Zheng Zhongxing's mech with its flying knee.

Thump! A roaring blow. Zheng Zhongxing was sent flying like a whammed dummy at the gymnasium, all the way out with its left waist dented completely in a spreading spiral caused by Ye Chong's vicious blow.

What an unfair battle, where both parties were at the different tangents. Ye Chong remained calm and cautious, no careless mistake from him.

Han Jia was set into motion once again, its engines were fully activated, as it rushed towards the jammed machine before it even hit the ground, with the cold dark dagger in the hand. One final blow.

Hua Tiankai's face looked bleached afar. Although he had no idea how the gears and nuts moved together in a machine, at he least knew the basics of combats - obviously his apprentice, Zheng Zhongxing had been the sandbag since the beginning. From the aspect of martial artists, the boy seized every opportunity before it even appeared in his eyes, unlike Zhongxing who was slapped in the face repetitively. Hua Tiankai's face was crazing the moment he witnessed his apprentice being smashed to the air.

Most of the practitioners did not understand mechs, but they did understand combats and they could tell that in less than a minute, the winning guy would be dealing the last blow.

Ye Chong sprung and was giving a final slash, "Ye," Shang's voice intruded, "Black Covers. In 3 mechs, coming here."

He flinched and held his steps, he shot a glance at the tumbling mech. A few taps on the interface, Han Jia's engines maximized! In the speed of light, Ye Chong blasted off Tianhua dojo. The whole movement was ghostly in the naked eyes.

The audience was confused of the premature ending, the sudden

exit of the winning man, likewise to Wei Yuan. Rui Bing on the other hand, sighed in relief. Yes she hated the apprentice but Zheng Zhongxing was still Uncle Hua's eldest apprentice, she seriously hoped that there would not be an awkward conflict between both her uncle and Ye Chong.

And that was when she came to the realization that... Ye Chong finally made a return and she did not manage to have a word with him, not even one...

Wait! She remembered the relationship between Ye Chong and Lan Yixing, she grabbed Wei Yuan, "Yuan, where's dojo? The one Lan Yixing ran!"

"Lan Yixing? Uhhhh... September Dojo...? If I remembered correctly... Oh wait, I think I remember where it is." Wei Yuan was the local and he knew his home at the back of his hands. Intelligently, he read Sister Bing's plan from her line, well Sister Bing is Sister Bing, smart.

This had just proven another face - Sister Bing did have something with that YC guy. Don't tell me! Were they a couple? Mhm... right, that made a lot sense. Only the strong ones like Sister Bing could be suited to a godly man like YC. Feeling proud, Wei Yuan's confidence over his untainted eyes grew.

Rui Bing lifted Wei Yuan, without any more words, they zoomed towards the entrance of Tianhua dojo. Tournament? I'm the panel judge? I don't care! I just want to see Ye Chong again! Nothing else was her concern any longer.

Her agitation seared her with blazing passion.

Wei Yuan was lifted like a sack of potato in her hand. As expected from Sister Bing, very strong! Wei Yuan was wowed while being carried to the destination, seeing the scenery melting away like a zoetrope. He got dizzy and he thought he would only see such visual effect when he piloted a mech and there was Sister Bing, recreating the effect without any tool. Godly...

I wondered what would happen if Sister Bing had a race with YC? The crazy thoughts went in his mind.

"Direction?" Rui Bing gave him a pinch and Wei Yuan woke up from his daydreaming, "Uhhhhh..." he rubbed his neck and muttered, "Pain... Sister Bing, be gentle. Ouch." A glare from the unsettled feline, "Oh! Oh! I remember now! Left! To the left!"

A rough sweep from Rui Bing through the street on her left.

Sigh... I miss the chair of my mech... Exclaimed Wei Yuan after getting RB-sickness for being lifted so long.

...

3 black mechs flew over the sky above Tianhua dojo, in gorgeous curve they headed to the northwest.

Ye Chong was relieved as that direction had indicated the fact that he was not the target this time, the mechs were just passersby.

"Sighhh... Ye. You made it, and you did not even talk to our Bing Bing. Tsk, tsk tsk..." Shang openly expressed his dissatisfaction, "You did not see how our Bing Bing reacted upon seeing you. That was... Holy Matrimony... Do you know how angel looks when her heart skipped a beat for a man on the ground? Sigh, never mind, it would be a bit challenging for you to figure such philosophical inquiry I forgot..."

Ye Chong was silent, seemed to be in deep thinking.

"Sigh, Ye, our Bing Bing..."

"Shang!" Interrupted Ye Chong, "Tell me, why can I not be absolutely calm like Mu? Like for today, I could have left without doing anything but somehow... I just did it."

"Ye... I never knew..." Shang was rolling his mechanical eyes, "I never expect you to be this dumb, because you are human, duh?"

"Because I'm a human?"

"Yeah, how could human like you be all calm and logical 24/7?"

Ye, please do not be like Mu that boring, monotonous, monochrome Mu. Not everything could be put into a formula, not everything could be reasoned with logic and not everything was done merely because there was a need to do so." The words came like a long-winded lecture from a nagging old lady... or maybe an old man, the meaning was quite deep...

"Oh I see," Ye Chong became his usual self.

...

One could hear the sparks in Shang's head.

"Ye, there, the drawer."

Ye Chong pulled the drawer open and found the red chip sitting there quietly, demanding to be taken. He sighed and gently picked up the microchip and put it into his bag...

Chapter 202: We Meet Again

September dojo was now even more desolated. News of Lan Yixing's death had not reached the place, and the dojo was peacefully quiet as usual.

The main door was open, but no sound was heard from within.

Looking at the September dojo right in front of her, Rui Bing's even breathing despite her hurried journey to the place now began to shorten. A faint blush colored her snow white cheeks.

Rui Bing breathed in deeply and ran, her figure almost like a gigantic bird, entering the dojo.

The dojo was silent, and without a single occupant. Rui Bing was unfazed, and continued inwards. Wei Yuan, however, looked around anxiously in her arms. Under Rui Bing's care, he was now livelier than before.

Ye Chong was about to leave the September dojo when Shang spoke up, "Ye, wait, let's go to the front."

"What's up?" Ye Chong asked, curious.

"You'll see!" Shang's tone was odd.

"Okay!" Ye Chong could not reckon what Shang was planning, but he knew that the mech would not harm him. For Ye Chong, the mech was his most trusted companion besides Mu. Shang may be up to some playful tricks once in awhile, but he would never do anything beyond that.

Ye Chong heard footsteps just as he stepped out of the room.

"An expert!" Ye Chong realized. Usually, people walked by landing the heel of their feet first, but Ye Chong could tell from the sound that this person moved with the tips of the feet. Ye Chong was similar in this regard, since the tips of the feet were more agile, and allowed for faster and more abrupt movements.

However, this was an expert technique, since the skill required strength in the tips of the feet.

The footsteps were coming closer to him.

Ye Chong stood before Lan Yixing's room, waiting for the visitor. Lan Yixing's two students were not here today, and the dojo was empty, so there was no worry of involving the others. Besides, Ye Chong believed he still had some time left before Hua Tiankai and his company reached September dojo. There was still enough time left.

Moreover, Shang had wanted him here. There must be something to it.

The footsteps came closer and closer.

Their eyes met.

"Hey, isn't that the lady in the training garb?" Ye Chong asked Shang inside.

"Lady in the training garb? Haha, what a nickname! Ye, you still have some imagination in you! Much better than that dull Mu! Lady in the training garb ... Tsk tsk ..." Shang was doubled down in laughter.

Looking at him with his typical coldness, but with a greater sense of maturity, she suddenly found herself at a loss for words. Rui Bing stared blankly at Ye Chong.

Ye Chong did not avoid her gaze. To him, the lady in the training garb had made a strange request, but he still quite admired her.

"You, how are you?" Rui Bing asked softly.

Ye Chong was speechless for a moment before nodding, and said, "Still alive!"

"Hah!" Wei Yuan could not help but laugh in Rui Bing's arms. Rui Bing frowned, and let go of Wei Yuan. However, Wei Yuan's outburst had removed the awkwardness between the two, or more

precisely, Rui Bing's awkwardness. Ye Chong did not feel a thing.

Being alive was not bad, according to Ye Chong.

"You're YC?" Wei Yuan looked at Ye Chong with glowing eyes.

"Yes," was Ye Chong's brick reply.

"What an ignorant d*mned fool, interfering at this moment. Ye, you can get rid of him!" Shang spoke through gritted teeth, obviously dissatisfied with his presence between Ye Chong and Rui Bing.

Ye Chong automatically ignored Shang.

However, Rui Bing seemed unhappy with his interruption, and grabbed Wei Yuan by the collar. Wei Yuan followed like a tame little lamb as she dragged him to stand behind her. Wei Yuan looked at the back of Sister Bing with pitiful eyes, but sensibly kept his mouth shut. He already had the answer he was searching for.

"I've been looking for you all this while." Rui Bing said calmly, but the faint emotions behind her words were noticeable even to someone as insensitive as Wei Yuan. However, Wei Yuan did not expect his idol to be more insensitive than him.

"Looking for me? For what?" Ye Chong asked with surprised.

Wei Yuan could not help roll his eyes behind Rui Bing.

Rui Bing felt her heart twisted, but her expression betrayed nothing as she continued plainly, "I want you to marry me!"

Wei Yuan almost dropped his jaw to the ground. Heavens, what was with these two oddballs in front of him? What a peculiar way to confess, it was so cool!

Rui Bing's words reminded Ye Chong of his life on Blue Ocean. The times he spent with Grandpa Qian was his happiest ever since he left the trash planet.

Rui Bing watched Ye Chong without a word.

Ye Chong gathered himself and looked to Rui Bing. "I understand the concept of marriage, but no matter how I look at it, this is not a good time to discuss it." Ye Chong knew from the chip that almost everyone in the world would choose to live their lives with someone of the opposite sex. While he did not see the necessity of it, Ye Chong was no longer dead set against the idea as he was before.

If he had to choose someone to live with, the lady in the white training garb did not seem like a bad choice. At least they could do combat training together. Ye Chong thought as much.

"Why?" Rui Bing's expression finally cracked a little, but quickly resumed her calmness.

"I have some things to do." Ye Chong's eyes flashed with killing intention as he thought of Papa.

"When will you be done?" Rui Bing asked.

"The situation is unclear, I don't know that yet." Ye Chong replied.

"I'll go with you." Rui Bing spoke with resolution.

Wei Yuan was staring bug-eyed. Were these two humans actually PSIs?

Ye Chong shook his head. "You're not skilled enough!"

Rui Bing was about to protest, so Ye Chong continued, "You can't pilot a mech."

Rui Bing went silent.

"Ye, there's a group of people heading this way." Shang did not wish to interrupt, but the situation demanded it.

"Someone's coming, I've got to go." Ye Chong nodded towards Rui Bing and turned to Han Jia, climbing into the pilot's cabin.

"Wait ..." Rui Bing gasped in panic.

Night descended, and Han Jia vanished like a ghost into the darkness.

In Windstar Hospital's main building.

Inside the building's spacious photon processor control room stood a single man. The photon processor control room was the hospital's core, and had the strictest security. The control room's entrance was guarded outside, and anyone who wished to enter the room must know the layers of passcodes. Only a few of the highest authorities had access to this room. Fortunately, the photon processor control room had mostly automated functionalities, and rarely required human maintenance.

The hospital building's highest floor was entirely occupied by the photon processor control room, and was mostly empty inside, except for the five advanced control photon processors.

Ye Chong found a chair and sat idly inside, with Shang by his side. The mech had demanded to come out, seeing as the room was large enough for him.

Since Wang Weixing was soon returning to the hospital, Ye Chong and Shang had planned and decided to stay at the hospital's main building, and they had picked the photon processor control room. Ye Chong even bought enough nutrient pills on the way to the hospital, enough to keep him going until Wang Weixing's return. Han Jia was also packed with these nutrient pills, in case he needed to spend a few days in outer space.

Windstar Hospital had unknowingly fallen into both his and Shang's grasp.

Using a backup control photon processor, Ye Chong accessed the chip left by Lan Yixing. As he browsed through the content, Ye Chong could not help but felt deep admiration for the man. Lan Yixing may look like a slow character, but he was actually very

Careful in nature. The chip explained the basics in great detail, leading up to the most advanced techniques, forming a complete teaching system. Even for someone without any basic knowledge in combat, that person could learn step by step from the chip. There were also many of Lan Yixing's personal insights inside. Lan Yixing demonstrated every move himself in the holographic recordings, and every move was explained clearly, a marked disparity from the way he taught Ye Chong before.

This was the most important material on combat that Ye Chong had found so far. Ye Chong never learned in a systematic way, and all his techniques were only poor mimics from others. It was only due to his excellent physical abilities that he could make use of those techniques effectively, and could handle common experts with no problem. However, if he were to meet with any more advanced opponents like those from Black Cove, Ye Chong would find himself in a bind.

The chip was a priceless treasure for someone as experienced in real combat as Ye Chong. Just a brief glance through the contents was enough to help clear some of Ye Chong's long standing problems in combat.

Besides Lan Yixing's weird muscle composition, which required a long period of special training, other things were easy for Ye Chong to pick up. Ye Chong had no intention of achieving that weird muscle composition; he was strong enough himself, and could control his physical movements almost as good as Lan Yixing. However, Ye Chong found some of the methods of movement control very useful.

In just one night, Ye Chong's combat skills improved by leaps and bounds.

Of course, Ye Chong was not aware of this, as he was still deeply immersed in this extraordinary world. The chip's description of Jie experts was also intriguing. However, despite being as capable as he was now, Ye Chong did not feel anything similar to the

experience of someone attaining Jie.

Nonetheless, Ye Chong did not mind it much. In the chip, Lan Yixing explained that Jie experts were not absolute in power, and this was something Ye Chong could understand. Ye Chong had seen all kinds of capable people; whether it was Black Cove's combat skills, MPA's terrifying shooting accuracy of the mysteriousness of the mentalists and mentalist pilots of the Sanctuary, there was no way to decide which one of them was the strongest.

Even Lunatic Guan's discreet alchemy skills were enough to escape his notice. Ye Chong believed that, should Lunatic Guan wished for his death, she would have many ways to choose from to achieve it. The more he learned for the chip Lunatic Guan left for him, the more Ye Chong grew wary of the alchemists. They were a scary bunch!

How many more fields were out there that were as secretive as alchemy? Who knew? The world was not short of capable people.

Strength was something to be wielded, this was something Ye Chong realized early on. A physically weak alchemist could just as easily be killed by a Jie expert.

Night was deep, and Windstar was illuminated by colorful lights. Windstar had three administrative centers, and Ye Chong's Thousand Birds zone was one of it. In autumn, flocks of these flying creatures would migrate, passing by the area. The view was magnificent.

However, it was now summer, and birdwatchers would be greeted with disappointment. Thousand Birds zone was Windstar's most economically thriving administrative center. The nightlights were also a local tourist attraction. At night, the sky would be filled with many blinking lights of all colors that came from specially crafted floating beacons. When tens of thousands of these floating beacons rose to the sky, the aerial view glistened splendidly. These

floating beacons were mostly handmade by the locals, and had their own automotive systems; some beacons could last for years in the sky at a time.

To avoid interfering with daytime traffic, these floating beacons were set with timers to rest on the roofs of residential buildings in the day. Due to their love of these beacons, most of the locals would reserve a spot on the roof for them.

Of course, traffic at night would be negatively impacted. The floating beacons made for a wonderful view, but they were also flying hazards. While the beacons were easy to spot at night, the thought of having these playthings everywhere in the air was a little unsettling.

Nonetheless, for those who could fly their mechs at night, it would imply that they were at least skilled in piloting.

Through the glass ceiling of the hospital building, the sea of blinking lights was mesmerizing.

Ye Chong pulled himself away from the chip's content, because that last technique was the one Lan Yixing used in his suicidal move. The thought of that mist of blood that day made Ye Chong dread continuing with the chip contents, but he quickly suppressed the feeling and finished examining every detail of this last move.

He finally understood what the mist of blood was all about. One could harness the energy stored in the muscles up to a point beyond the limits of the human body, and the muscles would tear. The torn muscles hardened with the energy stored inside, enough to penetrate 5 centimeters of alloy metal. However, what followed was the death of its user.

No wonder it was the last technique.

"Ye," Shang suddenly spoke up, "I have a plan, have a look." His sinister voice caught Ye Chong's attention.

"What plan?" Ye Chong asked as he stored the chip back into his bag.

"Here." The control photon processor before Ye Chong transformed, and displayed a set of detailed plans.

Ye Chong browsed through the plan. He could not suppress the rising chill within him that followed.

Chapter 203: Director of Chaos I

Unlike Mu's accurate and detailed plans, Shang's were usually very simple, but with undeniable power. Mu would take the straight and courageous road of winning by his own strength, backed by an enormous amount of precise calculations. On the contrary, Shang would choose the cunning path of unpredictability, even though his logic was infallible, and often based on extensive research in human nature.

The plan before Ye Chong was just one like that. In truth, Ye Chong had no qualms with Shang's style, and was quite taken aback by them. Every time, Ye Chong would find himself gaining insights into things that he did not understand. However, Shang's style was one he could not imitate, since he did not understand worldly perspectives and humans that well.

Even so, he had something neither Mu nor Shang had, such as his fighting spirit and learning skills. Even in the harsh environment like the trash planet, Ye Chong was able to survive on his own due to those two attributes.

Ye Chong's learning aptitude was something that Shang and Mu would commend on. Every battle served to make Ye Chong even stronger and more mature. As he learned more about the world, Ye Chong transformed into a more mature person. Of course, compared to the average person, Ye Chong still had to catch up in this respect.

For someone so long removed from normal life, he often felt disdain towards the norm and societal laws when he first entered society due to his ignorance. Once he gradually assimilated into society, he found himself slowly restricted by these laws. At this point, breaking these laws required not only courage, but also wisdom.

Shang was a peculiar teacher for Ye Chong, always armed with

such devilish wisdom.

That was how Ye Chong felt a chill down his spine as he read the plan.

The entire plan was simple, based on an analysis of the stalemate between Black Cove, the MPA and the Sanctuary on Windstar. It was this situation that gave Ye Chong a chance. If Ye Chong could stoke the fire and provoke a war between the Three Forces, their pressure on Ye Chong would be significantly reduced.

In Shang's words, to distract their attention away from him, he should find something more worthy of their attention.

Ye Chong agreed. This proactive initiative was what Ye Chong liked best - to control his own fate - a principle of his ever since his life on the trash planet.

However, the crux of the plan was creating a chaotic situation, and that was what made him chilled to the bone.

Shang's plan made use of the virtual world, and in an extensive way. It would involve Mu sabotaging the virtual worlds of 23 planets in total, including Windstar, plunging them into a chaos and paralysing the system into a state that was irrecoverable for at least five days. In five days, Wang Weixing would also be back to the hospital.

Ye Chong was no longer the ignorant young man he was before. He understood from Mu and Shang's attack of the Luo family of the importance of the virtual world. In every galaxy, the virtual world played an integral role in many aspects such as transportation, communication, economy and so on. The virtual world's paralysis would make the real world descend into chaos.

Of course, maintaining this state of chaos on 23 planets would not only allow them better control of the virtual world, but also avoid suspicion of the Three Forces, since Windstar was only one of planets involved.

Shang's plan was merciless.

Five days of chaos on 23 planets was a disaster of unimaginable scale. It would be impossible to maintain order in that situation, and easy to escape through the mess.

Even someone as cold as Ye Chong found himself shaken reading the plan. Ye Chong breathed in deeply a few times, and could not help but felt deep admiration for it.

"It's our first time on the offensive, gotta make it stylish!" Shang joked as Ye Chong regained his calm. He was not so moralistic as to be worried for other people's safety - this was war!

The plan was mainly executed by Ye Chong and Mu. While Shang wanted to direct the action himself, his computational skills were insufficient for the situation. Should they be engaged with any Mavericks along the way, even Mu could not ensure certain victory. The plan was of course reviewed by Mu, and Mu was equally excited by this challenge. Ye Chong could hear the unusual excitement in Mu's words.

On the contrary, Shang went behind the scenes.

Besides, Mu had another task, which was to find out more about Ye Chong's Papa.

"Begin!" Mu's typical calm voice reverberated throughout the highest floor of the hospital.

The 15th of July, 7 o'clock sharp in the evening was a time that everyone on Windstar would come to remember. This was the day that the most powerful virus spread violently throughout the virtual world. It was chaos, a sudden catastrophe. People found themselves living in the ways of old, where communications and traffic were a mess, and where even shopping required one to step out of their houses. This was when they found that they did not know the addresses of those familiar stores online in the real world.

The entire society descended into panic and fear. Communications were down, and local authorities had no effective measures against it. Even the governments from other planets could not afford to assist them. It was chaos! The people felt as though the apocalypse was nigh, and began to appreciate the normalcy of their previous lives. Social security took a nosedive for the worse. Without the assistance of city surveillance systems, the police found themselves lacking in manpower to face this unprecedented crisis.

In the blink of an eye, heaven turned into hell!

The world watched in fear at this concentrated region, where 23 planets abruptly descended into chaos. However, the monstrous beast seemed to have swallowed a huge prey, for the virus suddenly stopped spreading after that, providing a much needed reprieve. Almost all the other areas that were once in touch with these 23 planets severed their connections, for fear of meeting the same fate. Similarly, various rescue organisations were deployed to assist. Even so, they came from far away, and would need time to travel through the interstellar space between them.

At 7.05, Ye Chong quickly entered Han Jia and began hunting.

He was trying to find small squads of mechs from any one of the Three Forces. Communications were paralyzed, and even Shang and Mu would not be able to transmit long distance messages. All of Windstar's pulse signal generator towers were down. The goal was to cut off communications between the mechs of the Three Forces and reduce the advantage they had by their numbers. As long as Ye Chong kept away from larger mech squads, he would have nothing to fear. Nonetheless, should he meet any of their mechs, he must not leave any of them alive, or his efforts would all be for nothing.

At 7.05, night descended upon the entire Thousand Birds zone. Han Jia's anti detection feature now allowed it to become an assassin hidden in the darkness, waiting to deliver the killer blow

to its enemy. Whether it was Han Jia or Guardian, they were both real threats to the scattered enemy mechs.

Mu still stayed beside Ye Chong, for he needed Mu's excellent scanning system to locate the mechs from the Three Forces. Ye Chong did not have much time. Without Mu's active direction, the virus would quickly be overcome by any powerful Maverick. Without Mu controlling the virus, it would become but a fangless mutant.

Ye Chong had only one hour. After one hour, Mu must return to the hospital building and control the situation in the virtual world.

Numerous mechs flew across the skies, and traffic was a mess. People realized for the first time that the cute floating beacons were becoming a nuisance. The virus had just begun to act, and the virtual world nearly plunged into chaos. Many did not realize what was happening, only that the traffic had worsened. Violence on the streets had yet to begin.

Ye Chong was lucky. He found a Black Cove Cosmic Flare right after he left the hospital building. The sudden break in communications had obviously surprised the mech pilot, anxious to return.

Ye Chong's mouth arched into a cold smile. He was annoyed with Black Cove's pursuit, and it was only the fact that he realized the disparity in their strengths that Ye Chong chose to act defensively. If he did not act now, however, he would be a fool.

In terms of strength, Ye Chong believed that as long as he did not meet any Instructor level crazy experts, he would have no problems against the average Black Cove mech pilot. Besides, Han Jia's anti detection feature and Mu's excellent scanning system was enough to give him a good advantage in the battlefield.

Han Jia moved soundlessly like a ghost through the night.

Han Jia's engine was taken from Yu Di, the work of Fred the

Great himself. Its performance was impeccable, and together with Han Jia's ultralight skeleton build, the resulting automotive performance was enough to satisfy even Ye Chong. Mach 9 was a terrifying figure.

Ye Chong felt like he had returned to his hunting days on the trash planet, only now he was no longer piloting old Winnie, but an enviable full-skeleton mech. His prey were also not mutants, but strong and intelligent mech pilots.

Han Jia closed in rapidly towards the Cosmic Flare, and the other party did not notice. The skies of Windstar was already in a mess, filled with mechs that flew in confusion. The disorder had hindered the Cosmic Flare's advance.

Ye Chong followed closely from behind, the distance between them no more than 300 meters.

Ye Chong moved his hands over the controls. Two auto lock-on double-edged shurikens swished outwards, shrieking from the friction with the air, and traced out two large arcs in the sky before appearing before the Cosmic Flare!

These two shurikens were taken from the Harmony of the Winter Aria, and Ye Chong rarely used them. The Ji family had designed these two ancillary weapons with great care, their similarity to the UF magnetic sword greatly increased their effectiveness. For physical weapons moving at Mach 10, they were formidable.

Black Cove mech pilots were all competent, and as this one noticed two unidentified objects flying towards him in surprise, he managed to respond rationally. While Cosmic Flare had given concealed shooting chambers, shooting was not its forte. In that short span of time, the pilot decided to do what he did best. The shield on his left arm swung out laterally, blocking one of the shurikens. The curved blade on his right arm blocked the other shuriken easily as well.

In that instant, his ability to block both shurikens flying towards him at high speed was enough to convince anyone on the excellent combat capabilities of Black Cove mech pilots.

However, Ye Chong did not expect to kill his enemy with those two shurikens in the first place. Of all the mech pilots from the Three Forces, he understood Black Cove mech pilots the most. Just as the Black Cove mech pilot deflected those two shurikens, Ye Chong had already crept up silently behind the Cosmic Flare.

Two pitch black daggers traced out two elegant arcs as they struck towards the Cosmic Flare fast as lightning.

The mech pilot realized then that someone was behind him, and even managed to defend himself. Ye Chong believed that this mech pilot must be from one of the elite squads.

The Cosmic Flare inclined its body slightly, and Han Jia's direct attack was blocked by the two UF magnetic swords on its back!

Ding! A loud metallic clang sounded, and the two UF magnetic swords broke into halves. Unactivated UF magnetic swords were most fragile.

However, the mech pilot had successfully evaded the killer blow.

He turned himself with the momentum of the blow and finally saw the mech that attacked him. Despite his steadiness, he still could not help but gasped as he saw the mech clearly.

"This ... Isn't this the full-skeleton mech everyone is looking for?"

F-58! The designation came to his mind. He began to feel a deep sense of terror at this unexpected encounter.

Chapter 204: Director of Chaos II

However, he had no time to consider if this was actually a trap. Suddenly, the world spinned around him dizzily as he suddenly lost control of his mech!

This was Han Jia planting a knee kick into the mech! The heavy blow made Ye Chong regret not adding some barbs on the knees, or he would have put the other party out of commission permanently.

The Black Cove mech pilot was experienced, and knew that this was a normal effect from a heavy blow. There would be a short instance where he would lose control if the mech received a heavy blow, and it was important to remain calm right then, for the following attack would be the fatal blow. The faster he could regain control of his mech, the more likely he was to survive the attack.

Thoughts were idealistic, but reality was cruel. Under Mu and Shang's training, Ye Chong now rarely committed any mistakes. Given this opportunity, how could Ye Chong waste it?

Just when Ye Chong struck the other party, Han Jia's engine was already set to full blast mode, and as the mech accelerated to Mach 9 in that short distance, the result was devastating!

The Black Cove mech pilot watched in horror as a shadow fled past before his eyes, his calmness finally giving way to the fear of death.

Clang! Han Jia's shield, with its knife-sharp edge, cut towards the Cosmic Flare's throat. The iron-lizard made shield was solid and tough, its edges honed to perfection by Ye Chong.

Han Jia swept past the Black Cove mech in its attack, much like an assassin.

Just when the mech pilot in the pilot cabin was rejoicing over his escape from death, he suddenly heard a deadly shriek. Despite the

circumstances, he still felt intrigued - wasn't this from the two unidentified objects that attacked him earlier?

The two auto lock-on shurikens closed in on him from the front and back while he was still trying to regain control of his mech! The throat was the most protected part of a humanoid mech, the center node of a mech's inner photon circuitry. Once it was hit, the mech would be useless. Any slightly knowledgeable mech pilot would avoid getting hit in this vulnerable and important spot.

Now, however, the mech pilot could only watch as these two shurikens came closer and closer towards him!

Auto lock-on shurikens were, as their name suggested, fitted with auto lock-on features.

Bang! The first shuriken hit spot on the Cosmic Flare's throat, where Han Jia's shield had just damaged! Mach 10 was packed with formidable power, and the shuriken moved like a comet. The loud bang was followed by the decapitation of the Cosmic Flare, its head completely lopped off afar. The high frequency vibrations of the shuriken produced a jagged edge on the severed neck, as fragments flew out in all directions.

The effect was shocking.

The second shuriken seemed to sense the change, and made a small correction in its trajectory, humming as it flew towards the Cosmic Flare.

By now, the mech pilot in the Cosmic Flare was already drained of color. He watched in a daze as the second shuriken came in from the neck! There was a constant metallic buzz of impact between metals, accompanied by a howling shriek of pain, as silenced followed a few moments later. A few seconds later, something came out of the Cosmic Flare's neck - it was the second shuriken, exiting the mech.

The two shurikens flew back obediently to Han Jia like birds

returning to their nests. In the next moment, a loud explosion was heard as the Cosmic Flare blasted into pieces! It seemed that the second shuriken had destroyed the mech's power systems.

An hour was not a long time, but Ye Chong was extremely lucky. He managed to meet mechs from all of the Three Forces. It was apparent then that the Three Forces were amassing their strengths on Windstar, just to capture Ye Chong.

Ambushing in darkness required the element of surprise. Ye Chong would not attempt to deal with these scattered mechs had communications not been cut off. Ye Chong switched between Han Jia and Guardian, and found it quite effective. At least, he had not missed a single target so far.

Of all the mechs from the Three Forces, the Sanctuary's were the hardest to deal with, followed by Black Cove's, and finally, the MPA's.

This was undeniably a night of slaughter. Ye Chong had already finished off 13 mechs, of which three were the Sanctuary's Dawns, four of Black Cove's Cosmic Flares, and six of the MPA's Messengers. It was a productive night.

The hour was almost up, and Ye Chong had returned to the hospital building. Here, Mu would have to fight against powerful Mavericks in another battlefield. Ye Chong had wanted to observe from the side, since this was a once in a lifetime opportunity that he would not want to miss. However, Mu had rejected his request, saying that he could not guarantee Ye Chong's safety.

It was apparent that Mu was very wary of the Mavericks. Beside Mu was a large stack of backup energy cells.

In the end, Ye Chong obliged and waited for Mu. The wait was painful, but fortunately, his life on the trash planet had made Ye Chong far more patient than his peers.

Ye Chong rested to recover his strength from his earlier battles.

Even if he was only ambushing, he found himself quickly exhausted. However, he could not sleep just yet, for there was work to do.

Mu's computations consumed a large amount of energy, and Ye Chong had to replace his energy cells along the way. In the following hour, Ye Chong had switched 16 energy cells for Mu. One could only imagine the ferocity of the battle!

"Alright!" Mu heaved a long sigh, declaring the end of his side of the battle, and Ye Chong finally relaxed.

"How was it?" Ye Chong asked.

Mu said calmly, "The situation has stabilized. Until tomorrow morning at 8, unless there are more powerful opponents, the people I have met earlier will not be able to break through."

Ye Chong didn't know squat about photon processors, but he could still understand Mu's words.

Of course, Ye Chong could not know the severity of the battle between Mu and those Mavericks. Mu's opponents were nine elite Mavericks. These Mavericks were legendary, and given the chaos at hand, they had decided to assist without hesitation. Fortunately, none of them had decided to work together; some did not even realize that they had comrades, as their solitary nature was already deeply embedded within them. Mavericks were often equated to being loners.

The battle was one that would prove unforgettable for everyone involved. Of the nine Mavericks, one had died on the spot, and another two had fallen into a vegetative state. Actual murder achieved through the virtual world was only a legend told among Mavericks, and now they were repeatedly realized.

Ye Chong was not interested in matters of the virtual world. As long as Mu was alright, he was fine with it. Mu and Shang were irreplaceable to him.

23 planets had lost contact with the outside world, and everyone could only watch in horror. It was already four hours after the virtual world was first attacked. By now, everyone had realized what was going on.

The residents on Windstar panicked, and found their world rapidly decaying into a mess. Public order was declining rapidly, and the skies were filled with mechs flown by horrified pilots. Violence sprouted on the streets.

The place was now a living hell!

Hak felt his head throbbed in pain. He never expected to meet with such a crisis. They had lost all communications with Black Cove, and his underlings had reported that four Cosmic Flares had failed to return to base. This was a bad omen.

Windstar was now in a mess. It was impossible to conduct a search, and difficult even to return to Black Cove. Who knew when the virtual world could be restored!

However, the news of the four Cosmic Flares failing to return made him uneasy. Cosmic Flares were powerful mechs, and he could not think of any other opponent that could destroy them besides the Sanctuary and the MPA. Perhaps the F-58 might be capable enough, but these were four Cosmic Flares - how could he destroy four Cosmic Flares single handedly? He would not believe it. Even if he had a full-skeleton mech, it was still impossible.

On Windstar, the only ones powerful enough to destroy four Cosmic Flares were the Sanctuary and the MPA.

Could this be premeditated? Hak felt his heart skipped a beat. Indeed, it was quite a coincidence to lose four Cosmic Flares just when the virtual world went down. Hak felt that something was amiss.

Could this be a trap? Hak's expression twisted.

With such a large scale catastrophe, Hak believed that only one of

the Three Forces could be responsible for it. Of course, it was not Black Cove, he knew that. Then, was it the Sanctuary or the MPA? What was their objective?

Hak could feel a headache coming. He may be an instructor, but strategizing was not his forte. He felt that it was already an improvement for him to deduce this much.

In any case, they should first search for those four Cosmic Flares, dead or alive. "Humph, even if it is the Sanctuary or the MPA, I have nothing to fear," Hak thought to himself. The thing he was most worried about was F-58. There was still no sign of him. His orders had come from the top; should he fail ... Hak shuddered at the consequences.

He decided to lead a squad and head outside to investigate.

Chapter 205: Director of Chaos III

Ye Chong watched speechlessly at the chaos outside. This was a war between him and the Three Forces. Ye Chong did not exactly feel regret, but anyone watching the events unfolding would be affected. Shang was ruthless - no, whether it was Shang, Mu or himself, they all had their ruthless sides.

"Ye, a large squad of Black Cove mechs are heading this way." With the timely warning, Ye Chong quickly flew Han Jia into the darkness for cover. The Black Cove mechs swished past him, and Ye Chong spotted Instructor Hak amongst them.

35 mechs in total! Ye Chong was shocked by their numbers! Cosmic Flares were designed to be menacingly eye-catching, and a full squad of them made for a terrifying sight. This large squad of mechs charged through the road, unimpeded by other mechs at the sides. Ye Chong trailed behind them silently, eager to find out what they were up to.

The sky was full of mechs, and Han Jia was effectively hidden despite its odd appearance. However, there were more than a few mechs that wanted to jump on him along the way, and Ye Chong had to deal with them swiftly in order to catch up with Black Cove.

Ye Chong finished off at least 7 or 8 mechs along the way. The skies were littered with bouts, as more people began to unleash their vicious nature, no longer restrained by the laws of old. Fragments of mechs could be seen scattered about the grounds. In the end, Ye Chong decided to fly close to the ground. There were indeed fewer mechs at this height, and Ye Chong followed the Black Cove mechs at a distance.

In this chaotic mess, holographic scans were mostly useless. Hak found the situation outside more severe than he expected, and most of the Black Cove mech pilots could only stare in stupefaction!

The people here were mad! Everyone felt like they were sitting on an unstable energy cell that could explode at any moment. The dense flock of mechs in the skies was the result of overwhelming panic, and every member of Black Cove could only move forward carefully. If they got themselves involved in the mess, they would only become a small part of the larger scene of chaos.

Hak was also getting anxious.

Ye Chong moved like a fish, slipping easily between the mechs and buildings, dealing with any hostile mechs that came his way as he followed the Black Cove squad at a distance.

Fortunately, Mu's scanning system was not significantly affected, a testimony to Mu's strength. Mu was strong in all aspects. Back when Ye Chong began to study Mu's engine, he could not understand a thing about it, as the engine was more advanced than seemingly possible. Who could possibly have designed Mu? This was one of very few questions that Ye Chong continued to take interest in.

However, the thought was quickly dismissed as he regained his focus, following the Black Cove squad from behind. Even if the probability of being detected was very small, it was still sensible to be cautious.

"Ye, 30 degrees from the radius vector, there are MPA's mechs, 22 of them." Mu's cold and flat announcement came through in his clear electronic voice.

The MPA?

Ye Chong suddenly had an idea, and Han Jia immediately ramped up its speed. Night was the perfect cover for Han Jia, and since Ye Chong stuck close to the ground, it was impossible to spot him. As for the other average mechs that were targeting him, Ye Chong ignored them and escaped by sheer speed.

Ye Chong's mind was racing - he had no time to consult Mu. He

was evaluating the feasibility of his idea. On the trash planet, Ye Chong had developed a keen hunting intuition. However, his time spent relying on Mu and Shang had made him out of practice. In this moment, Ye Chong felt like he had returned to the trash planet, and his intuition came back to life.

Han Jia moved quickly, and swept like a gust below the Black Cove mechs, heading straight towards the MPA mechs.

Ye Chong felt particularly excited, and his hands moved faster. Han Jia's astonishing speed made it effectively like a ghost moving through the night, and the chaotic situation made it almost unnoticeable; what few people who saw it would only thought it was a trick of the eye.

Han Jia slammed to a halt firmly on the ground.

Ye Chong's face betrayed no expression. From his extensive experience in hunting, he knew that now was the time to keep his calm in order to gather his prize.

Ye Chong had took a huge detour, beginning from behind the Black Cove mechs and ending up behind the MPA mechs.

The MPA and Black Cove were outright enemies. Ye Chong's mind was spinning furiously, and he finally decided to execute his plan, as there was not enough time to evaluate it any further. The window of opportunity was very small. Looking at these two mech squads, they would probably pass by each other without noticing.

Beneath Han Jia's feet were all sorts of mech fragments, left behind by the ones who lost in whatever bouts they were involved in.

Han Jia quickly picked up a heat ray gun, still attached to a severed mech arm.

Ye Chong's plan was simple - he wanted the mechs from Black Cove and the MPA to notice each other.

Han Jia was behind and beneath the MPA mechs, and could see

the Black Cove mechs at a distance from where he stood. Even though it was nighttime, and Black Cove's mechs were all in black, the thirty over Cosmic Flares were still very conspicuous. These were powerful mechs lined up in tight formation, and the result was staggering. Other mechs quickly made way for this obviously hostile squad of mechs. The clear perimeter around the Black Cove mechs made them even more obvious.

However, there was still a hoard of mechs engaged in battle, right between the Black Cove and MPA squads.

Looking at the heat ray gun in his hand and the messy hoard of mech in front, Ye Chong could not help but sigh. Why was his shooting skills so horrible? Besides, he would have to shoot while moving with the MPA mechs, and his targets were also constantly in motion.

Ye Chong had no confidence in his shooting skills. In his hands, the gun was as effective as a metal stick.

Ye Chong was vexed, when suddenly, a wide opening appeared in the mech hoard between the Black Cove and the MPA.

Ye Chong was overjoyed, and aimed the heat ray gun through Han Jia.

"Target locked." Mu's calm voice gave him courage, and Ye Chong pulled the trigger without hesitation.

The faint light beams appeared weak against the dark background of the night. The sky was filled with beams aiming at various direction, and it was only natural for the heat ray beams to blend in with the others.

Immediately after it fired, Han Jia slipped into the hoard of mechs for cover.

Ye Chong's shooting skills were deplorable, and even with Mu's help, most of the heat rays missed their targets. Fortunately, however, some of them still hit the Black Cove mechs.

The Cosmic Flares that were hit paused and looked towards the source of the attack. Almost immediately after that, the Black Cove squad shifted their formation in anticipation - they had spotted the MPA's mech squad.

Ever since holographic scanning systems were invented, people had come to rely heavily on them. The system allowed for further and clearer lines of sight, with a larger scanning perimeter. The combination of photon processors and holographic scanning had also reduced the stress on the mech pilot in monitoring the scans.

However, as holographic scanning systems improved generation after generation, they still had their flaws. In a chaotic situation like this one, holographic scanning accuracy dropped significantly.

Both the MPA and Black Cove mech pilots relied heavily on holographic scans. As for Ye Chong, his time spent in the complicated territory on the trash planet had taught him better to use his eyes instead.

The MPA's mech squad was even more obvious. They were all white, arranged in battle formation. Any mech that entered their security perimeter would be greeted with a dazzling beam of light and a violent explosion.

After eliminating a few mechs this way, no more mechs dared to get close to them.

It was eerie to see both mech squads having a clear perimeter around them.

The Black Cove mech squad switched directions upon noticing the MPA mechs.

As the Black Cove mech squad reorganized themselves, the hoard of mechs between them and the MPA began to feel the building pressure of the threat. They quickly cleared the grounds to avoid getting involved.

In the span of a few seconds, the hoard of mechs between the two

mech squads had cleared out. Against the backdrop of chaos in the skies, here was a clear flying pathway.

If the MPA still did not notice their enemy by now, they should really just shoot themselves.

Almost instantly, the MPA's mech squad shifted their formation in anticipation too.

The growing tension between the two mech squads was so thick that even breathing became difficult.

Mech squabbles were not rare, but a battle between proper mech formations was. It was also obvious that the two sides were not made up of average mechs; any mech amateur could tell that.

Many of the mechs battling nearby had stopped by now, watching the two mech squads.

Black and White locked gaze at a distance.

Ye Chong hid himself amongst the other mechs and watched.

Compared to the newly formed grudge between the Sanctuary and Black Cove, the MPA and Black Cove were old enemies, and a meeting between the two would often end up as a fight to the death. Ye Chong had experienced this hostility first hand on Blue Ocean in his F-58. If he had not acted quickly then, he would have died many times over.

Abruptly, both sides attacked almost simultaneously! No words were exchanged.

The MPA mechs fired with all they had, moving backwards at the same time. They needed to widen the distance to gain the upper hand with their long range expertise. Even while moving backwards, their formation remained in shape.

The Black Cove mechs, however, quickly formed smaller squads and charged ahead like black vipers.

Distance was key in a battle between Black Cove and the MPA. As

someone who was familiar with the battle strategies of both sides, Ye Chong understood this well enough.

With the short distance between them, and the advantage in numbers of the Black Cove mechs led by an instructor, the MPA would lose. That was Ye Chong's deduction.

"The MPA will probably lose this time." Ye Chong said to Mu.

"Yes, based on my information, the probability is above 80 percent." Mu analyzed calmly.

"Looks like our plan is a success." Ye Chong was feeling good.

"Based on the current situation, if everything goes as planned, it will be successful." Mu was still replying in his cold manner.

The MPA seemed to realize that escape was impossible, and acted as much.

Ye Chong had seen the mechs of the Sanctuary and Black Cove battle in formation, but that was in space, and Ye Chong was not particularly awed by it. Here, however, the battle was within the atmosphere, right above the city, and Ye Chong could finally realize the horror of it all.

Both sides were nemesis, and knew each other well. From the beginning, they were no fancy moves. All strived to draw blood.

The spectating mech pilots all stared in shock! Compared to the battle they were seeing, their own bouts seemed like child's play.

The astonishing speed at which the battle progressed was also startling.

However, they did not expect the spillover effects of the battle to affect them.

As the battleground expanded, the two sides began to invade the space of the spectating mechs.

One particular mech was blocking the way of a Cosmic Flare in pursuit of a Messenger, and was instantly dismembered into a

thousand pieces. The Cosmic Flare was undeterred and continued its pursuit.

The most terrifying was the Messenger's light beams. Normal laser beams were enough to penetrate two mechs, but the Javelin Angel's nanowaves were even more powerful - one shot was enough to sear out a clear spot.

"Heavens, are they still human?" All the mech pilots were horrified! Whatever courage they had was now diminished to nothingness.

When ruthlessness was met against more extreme ruthlessness, the result was horror and despair.

Almost all the surrounding mechs had stopped fighting and escaped as fast as they could. They could only blame their engines for not flying fast enough to clear the area. A few mechs were still deeply engrossed in their fight. Bang! A huge explosion wiped them out.

With this live example, the surrounding people picked up their pace in escaping.

While he was eager to find out the outcome of the battle, he would stick out like a sore thumb by staying behind. Ye Chong reluctantly left with the retreating swarm of mechs.

All in all, the plan was successful. As for the results, time would tell. Ye Chong returned to the hospital building in good spirits, while Mu worked on controlling events in the virtual world.

Nonetheless, ever since the great battle between Black Cove and the MPA, public order had surprisingly improved. At least, there were no longer any mech squabbles in the skies.

Ye Chong never suspected the long terms consequences the plan he, Mu and Shang had put in motion for the state of the world. Perhaps, even if he knew, Ye Chong, Mu and Shang would probably feel indifferent about it.

Chapter 206: Change

Five days went by quickly. With the exception of the initial chaos, followed by the open war between Black Cove and the MPA, it seemed as though all other criminal activity had ceased. After the initial confusion, governments reacted swiftly and organized police mech patrols all over the skies. Daily goods were delivered door to door.

However, the destruction left from the war was difficult to recover from. Even though it was only a war that involved over 50 mechs, their scientific advances far exceeded anything the Five Galaxies had ever seen before. It was a traumatic experience for Windstar. Thousand Birds zone received the heaviest damage. The prosperous area was now littered with ruins, and the casualties came in staggering numbers. War was cruel, and everyone could feel the cold atmosphere spreading from it.

This was a one-in-a-century kind of disaster! These five days felt like centuries to the residents of these 23 planets. The most discouraging thought was, no one knew how long it would go on. Would it be a month? A whole year? None could answer this question.

Just when everyone was quietly enduring the disaster, the virus in the virtual world seemed to have vanished unexpectedly. People discovered to their surprise that all systems were beginning to function again.

Communications were up, traffic was organized ... It seemed everything had returned to normal. People went to the streets to celebrate the end of the disaster.

"Hah, you wouldn't know it, let me tell you, this time it's thanks to the alliance of the governments of the Five Galaxies that killed that d*mned virus. I heard there are also some experts from the military ..."

This seemed to be the most reasonable explanation, and people accepted it quickly. They fully relaxed and cheered jubilantly. After the disaster, the joy of rebuilding was accompanied by the sorrow that came from the disaster.

Things began to get back on track.

Soon, a massive influx of aid agencies arrived at Windstar, bringing with them a large amount of various direly needed resources. Together with them was also a good amount of reporters.

Of the 23 planets, Windstar received the worst of it all.

The diligent reporters amassed a great amount of information, such as recordings of the fights on Windstar. The most precious one was of a courageous citizen, who recorded a holographic video of the war between the MPA and Black Cove.

This recording caused a huge uproar. All the mech designers realized that their so-called advanced mechs were useless against these black and white mechs. The advanced level mech pilots were shocked by the piloting standard demonstrated by those mech pilots. Unbelievable mech maneuvering, extraordinary shooting skills - in their mind, most of the skills demonstrated in the video was impossible for any human. Mech combat experts in the virtual world recognized that the black mechs were actually using close range battle techniques. Close range mech models rapidly gained popularity.

For the average people, they were horrified by the cruelty of those mech pilots.

No one knew who they were, where they came from, or the name of their mech models. Everything was shrouded in mystery. However, one thing was clear - no one in the Five Galaxies had such power in their hands. People began to realize that the world was not as peaceful as it seemed to be, and that not all forces were governed by their laws.

War had been such an unfamiliar term to them. This holographic recording, however, seemed to suggest the advent of one. Windstar's Thousand Birds zone beared witness to it. The spillover effects from more than 50 mechs had nearly destroyed the entire administrative zone. The thought was chilling.

Just as terrifying were the curved guns held in the hands of the white mechs, as beautiful as they were dangerous!

Only experts specialized in nanowaves would realize that the guns had actually shot out nanowaves. In the Five Galaxies, nanowaves were only at an experimental stage, and far from any real application.

The nanowave experts were not the only ones to feel dejected. The scientific technology demonstrated by both sides in this holographic recording made all scientists realize the difference in their abilities. The difference was not negligible, but a truly huge disparity.

Who were these people?

It was not that the world had never heard of the Three Forces - Black Cove, the Sanctuary and the MPA. The Three Forces were deeply entangled with many local governments around the world, but the magnitude of this war was enough to overcome the suppressive forces of these governments.

Information about the Three Forces began to leak, little by little in the virtual world. The Sanctuary was never heard of by the public, and were now a deep mystery to the people. The benevolent MPA now inspired fear.

For anyone with a little common sense, it was easy to realize that the former peace was over.

Together with the Sanctuary that had not been openly exposed thus far, the Three Forces had enough power to rival that of the Five Galaxies, governor of their worlds. This meant that the Three

Forces were not ruled by the laws of the Five Galaxies. With the authorities at war, how could the people live peacefully?

All these matter were, of course, ignored by Ye Chong.

Ye Chong waited for Wang Weixing's return, the only thing that mattered to him. According to Wang Weixing's schedule in the hospital building's control photon processor, this was the day Wang Weixing would come back. Ye Chong was afraid that the chaos on Windstar would delay his return.

However, Ye Chong did not expect Wang Weixing to not only reach Windstar on time, but head straight towards the hospital from his flight without returning home to rest. A doctor's heart was still difficult for Ye Chong to understand. Windstar had too many casualties that swarmed the hospital, and the medical team was overwhelmed. That was why Wang Weixing had rushed to the hospital.

With his part of the plan perfectly executed, Mu retired to give way to Shang. Shang took the schedule between them seriously, and would not allow himself to have less surfacing time. As for Mu, he was uninterested in "surfacing", and seldom argued with Shang. Fortunately, Shang had not developed the habit of taking advantage of Mu.

"So many people!" Shang sighed.

"Yeah, it's a lot of them!" The large hospital building was swarming with people, and the wounded could be seen everywhere. Windstar Hospital was not only a medical facility, but also a research center. However, due to the enormous volume of casualties, all medical staff had been called to service. Looking at the situation before him, Ye Chong began to have doubts on his decision in executing this plan.

Shang affected a sympathetic tone as he said, "Sigh, war, such a horrible thing!"

Ye Chong burst his bubble. "Don't pretend, you're the main culprit!"

"Cough, cough, Ye, don't simply say these things, I'm as pure as an angel!" Shang lied outright.

"What's an angel?" Ye Chong's many adventures in the outside world had obviously not touched on old legends and myths.

"It's a mythical God with wings, one with a pure and kind heart."

"Oh, a birdman!"

"Cough, cough ..."

Ye Chong finally saw Wang Weixing, and immediately find him looking very familiar. When Ye Chong had just escaped from Black Cove and boarded a starship, he had encountered one old Mr Wang, and he looked just like Wang Weixing. Was this really a coincidence? Nonetheless, aside from a tiny sigh on how small the world was, Ye Chong had no other concerns. He was wearing a mask back then, and Wang Weixing would probably not recognize him.

Wang Weixing looked weary from his long interstellar travel, and the fact that he had not rested since he stepped into the hospital only made him look even more tired. Wang Weixing smiled and said, "Young man, have a sit."

Ye Chong found a seat and sat down without hesitation.

After Ye Chong finished explaining his situation, Wang Weixing spoke after a moment's thought, "Alright, why don't I perform a full examination on you first. Your issue might be more complicated, and I'll need time to do some research. Besides, as you can see, there's a lot of people out there who needs immediate medical attention, so I'll need longer."

Ye Chong asked, "How long?"

Wang Weixing gave it a thought and said, "Hmm about four

days."

Ye Chong nodded. "Alright, then I'll come back in four days."

Wang Weixing gave a small laugh. "Thank you for your understanding."

Ye Chong replied calmly, "It's alright." While he really hoped for Wang Weixing to examine him immediately, Ye Chong understood that it was not an option. Ever since he stepped into the hospital, he had seen many casualties, and he could do nothing to ease the situation.

He quietly returned to the main hospital building's photon processor control room. Four days was not too long for Ye Chong. He had plenty of things to keep him occupied in the meantime. Alchemy, for example, or that chip left by Lan Yixing, or meditation. The control room was spacious enough for him to even practice piloting Guardian. As for Mu and Shang, they would help him find out more about the man called Gao Shichang.

Ye Chong did not know that the investigation on Gao Shichang was going to be a lot harder than expected.

Chapter 207: Physique

Prometheus Group was a classic, established, time-honored brand for mech manufacturing. Their Matte series were once a hot-selling classic among the pilots, which later became the backbone of the entire infantry of later mech productions. "The Father of all Mechs", the prime designer of Matte series, Gao Shichang was called.

For a series that retained its influence in the market today despite being 2 decades old, one could tell the capability of this series and that justified how Prometheus Group established their place in the field today. Easily anyone could claim that, without Matte series, there would be no Prometheus Group. According to these premises, Gao Shichang, a significant figure of the whole group, who also happened to be the one who stirred up a storm in the designing industry for being the best mech designer among the 5 galaxies back then, should not be a challenging topic to research on...

Or so Ye Chong thought... The reality was against his presumption however. Gao Shichang's information was not as easy as having his name suggested right after the letter "G" being typed on the search engine he thought. Ye Chong could not tell if his long-lost papa could have been that Gao Shichang. Only if he could find a clear hologram visual of Gao Shichang right now... he believed he could get the answer right away.

But the catch, the very strange catch was, there had hardly been any information about Gao Shichang on the virtual world networking system. He did discover a few entries, which only contained a few brief lines of description. Hologram visuals were nothing new in this galaxy where people travelled in the sky as routine, machines did most of the work and people read on hologramic interfaces, there should have been a visual of Gao Shichang, yet to Ye Chong's confusion, there was barely any, not

even a silhouette.

Mu was handling the searching currently and it was an astonishment to the artificial intelligence as well. The sound explanation would be, Ye Chong believed, the records about Gao Shichang were deliberately erased from the system, obviously by some really advanced Mavericks like Mu.

Unfortunately it had been so long that any sign of blatant deletion had already disappeared way before Ye Chong's inspection. That was already the case in reality, not to mention the Virtual World which had a tremendously rapid updating system flow.

Mu even hacked into the demographic information center as an attempt to retrieve potentially overlooked information. Nevertheless, "Gao Shichang" returned a negative result. The information center had stricter administration however, as Mu discovered something... "Yes, there were signs of deliberate deletion." The journals were kept perfectly too, there were some clues but it would be way too far-fetched if one were to find out a man who disappeared 20 years ago with solely clues this little.

The conclusion? Ye Chong could confirm something with Mu Shang in the end - someone or something had destroyed all sorts of information attached to Gao Shichang.

And that someone or something must be a super Maverick because it would be considerably difficult to wipe out someone on the net completely without alarming people, even for Mu.

The more peculiar part was this was done by a Maverick. Twenty years ago. If that Maverick lingered, hell knows how potent he or she had become. Although one could argue that a Maverick was not a profession which the skill was determined by age, so far not a single one Maverick was known to lose their skills gradually as they aged. Perhaps it could be the imaginative nature or the creativity that one elderly could lose against the youngster.

Nonetheless, the elderly always held the calmness brewed by the years he gained immense experience from, which eventually his calculation would turn be more acute and cautious, with mistakes little to none. A senior Maverick's calculation would be more of a hard nut to crack.

Mu tirelessly was still on the net, looking for any tiny bit of information related to Gao Shichang. Regarding this, both Mu and Shang possessed something that most humanity did not - they did not recognize fatigue, they did not recognize dejection. They were immensely patient.

Ye Chong could not meddle with this search, not the slightest. He might be the first person in the entire galaxy who wanted to find out the visual of Gao Shichang, but if it turned out to be a random guy with the same name as his father, an amusing coincidence, he was not that kind of caring person who would get involved with a total stranger. If that was indeed his father, no way he would be watching everything by the side.

So, to do or not to do, the key lay within the visual of his "papa".

Ye Chong had some great self-control, for he did not waste the next 4 days doing nothing, despite having losing his head over the search. Lunatic Guan had given him a very detailed course to study. That little chip was consuming to read, unlike Lan Yixing's martial arts guide which he had rich experience in, making it relatable. Moreover, Ye Chong had some basics on muscle manipulation that he could learn the Lan family of the September effortlessly, he just lacked the guidance after all, which Lan Yixing's chip would suffice. Alchemy however, was something new. He did learn a few tricks from Lunatic Guan, but the following syllabus was so deep, he literally knocked the way out with his cracked head.

At least he had good understanding and memory so it was not that torturous after all.

For meditation, Ye Chong kept it up the whole while. Even though the way of living of a mentalist was felt to be not his thing, he could feel the benefits from doing basic meditation.

Yes, the calmness during battle, which reasoned the fearsomeness of mentalist for Ye Chong. That eternal serenity, combined with the mysterious forces and average martial archery, Ye Chong would say the real threat would be those from the Sanctuary, rather than the Black Covers or MPAs.

4 days passed like a day. Whenever Ye Chong got his head into knowledge, time sure flew.

Ye Chong came to the clinic of Wang Weixing, who never had an idea that Ye Chong had been causing little bit of havoc at the outside with his identity.

The clinic was still busy as ever. Well, it felt more of a medical center, a hospital, as the wounded whined and whimpered. The wailing rang throughout the corridor, at least there were much lesser injuries compared to his visit 4 days ago.

Wang Weixing had his hair tussled, messed, ruffled, any way one could describe a total mess in fatigue, blatantly telling Ye Chong that he did not spend the past 4 days well. The tasks could be fatal to an elderly like him. There was too much to do and too little workforce to help, although he did not even have the leisure to think of the fatality of taking one patient or another, as he screamed "Next!", every few minutes.

"Here's my boy," said Wang Weixing with a smile upon seeing Ye Chong, whom he believed to be the one who understood the reality of being a doc.

"Mhm," Ye Chong sat right in front of Wang Weixing.

The moment the doctor took his seat along, the expression turned stern. The fatigue on the face vaporized and was replaced with solemnity.

"Mhmmmm..." Pondered the elderly, "My boy, I had performed a detailed research on the outcome of your body inspection. As you have mentioned that you had certain kinds of symptoms, I would say you could have consumed some kind of steroids before, by mistake."

Ye Chong did not interrupt the doctor as his expression demanded his elaboration.

"Such steroid... a very tyrannic kind. Or precisely, dominating. This is the first steroid being so dominating in reaction I had encountered after all these years in my research. It was also the first strange kind too." The doctor took a breath.

"Normally, as long as it is a steroid, or even artificial hormone, there would be side effects inevitably, which would be reflected on your body directly, like the pattern of your body changes for example, be it rashes or disarmed immunity. But the one you have taken by mistake... there is in fact a side effect, but not on simple things like these, rather it would make you depend upon it. The dependency grew so overwhelmingly that the mentioned symptoms would return as long as you do not take them regularly."

Then the doctor exclaimed, "How horrifying..."

"The steroid could vastly improve your body mechanism. It performs modification on your muscular structure. In this case, it would not burden your body. Yes, yes, yes, as long as you take them regularly that is. On the contrary, it had modified your body, an overhaul I must say and an alarming ones that is. I seriously have no idea who made this but it's genius! It took me quite a while but I still could not find out its exact chemical composition."

Ye Chong was expressionless the whole time.

"Hah! My boy, do not worry, if this steroid has given me enough shock you thought, then you are wrong, you had given me a greater shock," gleefully the doctor replied.

"What?" Ye Chong frowned. "Me?" Clearly, he did not comprehend.

The elderly grinned, "I had performed a full inspection on your body remember? The outcome was truly a shocker to me. Most of the mechanism of your body turns out to be way above average, including the strength of your muscular structure, the density of your skeleton system and even the capacity of your cardiovascular system. Physique-wise, your body is hitting perfection. And from your bloodstream I had retrieved some residue of a kind of steroid and then there's this thing, flowing in your blood, an unknown chemical substance..."

"What is it?" Ye Chong remained calm.

The calmness of the boy was something Wang Weixing found to be eccentric. Normally any youngster of Ye Chong's age would be jumping from the chair and demanding an immediate response, but Ye Chong was there sitting, all wordless and wise, even when the topic was something regarding his life.

"It's a factor. A very different factor," he smiled. "I had never come across such factor before in my life and I could not find any information on it. But I could be confident to say that, this is the factor which keeps improving your body."

"Well, you probably were the kind of kid with a well-built body compared to your classmates back then I suppose?"

Nodded Ye Chong.

"Then that's it. I had attempted to extract the factor from your sample, but never knew I would fail miserably in the end in spite of all methods I have tried. Shame..." Wang Weixing's expression grew regretful, "Although I had failed miserably, I still managed to find something unique."

"What was unique?" asked Ye Chong.

Wang Weixing was a medical doctor, but he also was a

researcher. And that moment his seriousness of being a researcher was depicted.

"The factor happened to be very similar with the steroid you have mis-swallowed. But the composition of the factor was much more facilitated than the steroid I must say, that I even started to suspect if the steroid was a copycat trying to mimic the composition of the factor instead. It turned out to be a failed carbon copy. The factor mixes with the blood way better than the steroid. Let me guess, you did not have any of those symptoms before you consumed this steroid, am I right?"

"Nope," he shook his head, even though the conference in his head was about to get chaotic. When the hell did I even have a factor running in my blood and I did not know?

The response was expected, "That would be it. The superior physique you possess shares a correlation with the factor inside you, like the structure of your muscles for example, according to exercise physiology, your structure must be colossal great to supply the strength you wield for now. However, because of the factor inside you or in simpler terms, the strange physique of yours, your structure would not gain its mass while your strength grew over the time. That steroid was a glaring copy of the factor, trying to get a similar effect on your body, but it was half-baked so it returned a number of side effects in the end."

...

Ye Chong was silent. His inside was grumbling in chaos. Mu Shang were also wondering the same conundrum, his physique had always been a mystery.

"The physique you have... should be of inheritance, as such factor has a strong resistance to foreign matters so you could not obtain it by a simple injection or whatsoever. The steroid you possibly have injected was pre-dominating since the dosage was high, which resulted those symptoms you have mentioned for the next long

period of time. But slowly, gradually, as time goes, that factor of yours took back its place as it engulfed and destroyed the steroid particles inside you. The amount of steroid inside you remained at a negligible amount now. So not much to worry... Those symptoms should never occur again." The doctor seemed very pleased for the youngster freed from disease.

"Woohoo, you heard that? Ye? You are actually alright!" Shang who had listened to the exchange the entire time was grooving joyfully inside Ye Chong.

"The warning..." Wang Weixing withdrew his smile, "My boy, please, listen, on my plead, please, never ever consume any more of those steroids. The side effects are too great and the effects are subpar compared to the factor inside you. You seriously could have ditched this business failure, it was a bad trade. And one more thing, all of the current unique physique or bloodline we have discovered so far in Science are known to suffer from a particular type of weakening, which we would name it as 'Relativity Diminish Syndrome', you've got to ask your family, the immediate members of yours, like your parents for example, to know if they suffer from any kind of disease. Or else... if one day you suffer from the syndrome and you are not ready for it, that... that would be horrible I would say. You could die from it."

Immediate members... family? Those words rang bitterly in Ye Chong's ears. Those were some really foreign terminologies he had heard.

"Alright... I had covered most of the things... I think." He checked the list in his hand, "Mhm, the conclusion, all is well and your body is much healthier than most people out there. If it was not the happening this time, I would really love to take a careful research on the factor inside you. Mhm, right, good, good, well I have some other patients to diagnose, if you would excuse me," summoned Wang Weixing, for the next patient!

"Thank you," bowed Ye Chong slightly, the line came off wholly

from his heart.

Wang Weixing did not look at Ye Chong. He waved his hands, signaling him to go, as his eyes were fully focused on the statistic, the diagrams on the hologram appeared on his table.

Ye Chong felt much more relieved as he left the hospital. The syndrome actually cured itself and the mystery of his physique had been revealed.

Family members? Well that was nothing to concern about. He grew up on Trash Planet, so where the hell could he find a family member? There was one and only one member, papa... And papa was ... well, perhaps he would be alone for the rest of his life. Thought Ye Chong as he looked at the sky.

The last mystery of his life could just be whether papa was Gao Shichang, the designer of mechs after all. If that was done, he would find a planet and spend his remaining life in tranquility with his best buddies, Mu and Shang, just like Grandpa Qian at Blue Ocean, doing the things he liked, caring for the people he truly cared.

Chapter 208: My Life as a Spaceship Owner I

Rainbow planet, was a residential planet in the Fal galaxy, where there would be an arch of rainbow after every rainfall in the sky. Sometimes the arch was brightly colorful. Sometimes it was a little pale, with a beautiful translucency which people adored as much as its starkness on occasions. The name of the planet was from this arch of course. The HQ of Prometheus was also located there.

Ye Chong was an action-oriented person. He would not want to waste his youth on Windstar. He planned to leave the planet after discovering the syndrome to be null the whole time. The MPA had some issues with Black Coves back then but Ye Chong had never seen the fireworks in the sky with them flying against each other ever since. Ye Chong would not buy the fact that the forces had forgotten his existence nonetheless.

Windstar had been obliterated generally, like the remnants of the planet were only there to denounce its death, as various organizations came to rescue. The number of spaceships grew dramatically ever since. Ye Chong could not find a spaceship which would directly head to Rainbow however.

"Ye! Ye!" Shang on the other hand kept suggesting him to get a spaceship, as the artificial indulgence named the advantages, "Well, it's cool. Chick digs it." Those so-called advantages did not pique Mu and Ye Chong's interest. The suggestion itself did get his interest nonetheless.

If I own a spaceship myself, the advantages are there. I no longer have to do spaceship-pooling and I could significantly lower the chances of being discovered by the forces in the galaxy. With the spaceship, I would gain direct mobility and I could perform the necessary action if anything bad happens...

The catch would be the identification procedure whenever they landed a planet. Well that was not an issue to Mu, since he could

work on something in the databank of the Virtual World. Getting a legitimate identity for Ye Chong was a piece of cake.

"Very well..." As a consensus was achieved, the next step would be getting a spaceship itself.

The price of a spaceship was utterly of a different level compared to mechs. The manufacturers of spaceships were none other than those major companies, superior groups with vast resources and networking. It was not something those average companies could handle.

Plan A would be to steal the ship from someone else. That was the only plan in Ye Chong's mind. "No." Both Mu and Shang disagreed, with the reasons being, "The situation of Windstar is currently at a highly alarmed state, any deviance would immediately gain attention from every other individuals," by Mu; "No civilized man would use such a low and crude method just to obtain a ride," by Shang.

If both Mu and Shang disagreed to that, then it must be because they had gotten a better plan. Ye Chong kept his mouth shut. He had better things to do. Time was never a thing Ye Chong believed to be ample of, same goes with tasks. The learning tasks had always been there and those were the things that formulated growth in his capabilities. Strength, capabilities were his everything.

And Ye Chong was in an abandoned underground storage at the moment. Whether how and why Mu found out, that was not his concern. He realized how perfect the place was for his piloting practice. "Let's see..." Ye Chong began listing the mechs he had. There were Han Jia and the Guardian, both the most trustworthy arsenals in his team. Then there was one mech he got from the Sanctuary after plotting against them. And Overwing from Mu Fei... 4 Dawn mechs... then a few non-combat models he bought from Nine Gates City.

Han Jia and the Guardian were the mechs he grew most familiar with. Overwing was excellent but Ye Chong had never used it before, it also required the pilot to coordinate using some Mentalist attributes... then Ye Chong could never excavate its potential with his limited capacity. The original design was outstanding to Ye Chong however, which broadened his horizon on mech designs. Overwing was more of a research sample than a war machine.

Same goes with the 4 Dawn mechs he plundered before, it was research more than an application purpose, especially when Dawn mechs were way inferior than Overwing. Ye Chong took a few glances before he left them at the corner. His eyes could hardly have them after encountering so many masterpieces on his journey.

The problem was there. He needed something to pilot but none of the mechs could not be put under the sun, be it Han Jia or the Guardian, even Overwing. He would be busted even before the battery hit the 75% mark. Han Jia could not be camouflaged, as its surface was made out of unique materials where any finish would go off by the slightest blow of the wind. That was also the case for the Guardian but the miniature design was more of the eye-catching headache. Overwing... that would be just a bloody shoutout to Sanctuary that he killed Mu Fei right in their face. Ye Chong was not that dumb to do a shoutout to enemies. Dawn mechs could be used as a camouflage, he could pretend as a rookie Sanctuary pilot and fly but the camouflage would only work once or twice.

It was a plight Ye Chong had discovered, that nothing in his armory was useable. It felt like floating on the seawater while being thirsty.

Sigh... I'll figure this out some other time. Ye Chong discarded the thoughts.

Ye Chong's understanding towards the martial arts had ascended

to a whole new level after learning from Lan Yixing's microchip. Ye Chong himself felt his skills had improved substantially. It just felt like someone who had been learning things himself was suddenly thrown to a class of systematic tutorials, which deepened his understanding and did not bind him with the theories the class taught.

Applicability-wise, the techniques were very much limited in an unarmed fight, thus the mech combats Ye Chong was practicing at the moment. Inside Han Jia he imagined the possible manner to perform those moves, attempting to pull them off to refine his skills on fighting in a mech.

His moves were more simplified compared to his experience. They were less dazzling and less confusing, where each move was well-flowed with the other and the power had been increased slightly.

Han Jia remained as the best choice for mech combat practices. For the Guardian, it was the practical mech to fully exert the potency of unarmed combats.

"Ye!" Shouted Shang during Ye Chong's practice.

He held his fist, assuming that Mu and Shang had solved the problem of getting a spaceship, "What is it?"

As expected, "Kekeke, Ye, we got our ship! We bought it," said Shang.

"You... bought it?" The verb was the whole point he captured right away, "What did both of you pay with? If it's money, how?"

And Ye Chong's question got an eyeball from Shang, "Money is merely a set of figures to both Mu and I, it was nothing major, we have tons of methods to achieve this."

"I see," responded Ye Chong, who too held zero interest towards money, "So where's the ship?"

"Keke, we would need you for that. But well, before that, you

need to get an identity card," Stated Shang.

Getting an identity card was not something new to Ye Chong. He was so used to it that it did not take him long before the card just popped out of the kiosk machine. The name on the card this time was "Gu Wei", being one insignificant member from the enormous family tree of the aristocratic Gus in Tian Luo galaxy. "Gu family" from Tian Luo reminded Ye Chong of Gu Shaoze, who was from the same family of course, a significant one too... probably, speculated Ye Chong.

"Shang, of all families, why the Gus?" asked Ye Chong

"Well, it is rare for anyone to have a spaceship under private ownership. Only those wealthy aristocrats or administrative group, the executives could normally own it. If you have it under the name of the Gus, it could reduce the amount of hows and whys you get from the people around, plus you won't be getting that much of attention. The planet we are heading this time, is located at Fal galaxy. That is far, far away from Tian Luo galaxy so we probably won't be bumping into any real member of the Gus. Well, even if we were so unfortunate to encounter one of them, it would not be surprising if we did not recognize each other, considering how huge an aristocratic family like the Gus is, you could not count the branches extended from each family. The probability of them recognizing each other is too low to be discovered. Anybody would stumble upon the tree and give up checking you out."

"Oh, I see," Ye Chong expressed comprehension.

So, Ye Chong, in accordance with Shang's instruction, travelled through the access zone and passed countless spaceships parking by the side. He arrived by one blind corner.

A gigantic spaceship parked there quietly. The body was dark, flat and smoothly curved, with an appearance like a whale. There was no lump, the back was streamlined, unlike those squares and pointed spaceships he usually saw.

The first thing Ye Chong noticed was the size, where the spaceships nearby were like its little brothers in comparison, despite being much smaller than Fred the Great's Sabre which had the length of 10 km. The spaceship before him was not that outrageously long, but it still had a length of about 5km.

"How was it, Ye?" asked Shang, satisfied of Ye Chong's reaction, "Fascinating isn't it? Sadly it is not Slan graded, that is what defines a cool spaceship."

A young man waited near the ship walked towards him upon his arrival, "Excuse me..." Courteously he asked, "Are you Mr. Gu Wei?"

"Yes I am," flatly Ye Chong replied, nodding his head.

"Oh, greetings, Mr. Gu Wei, I am a staff from Windy Sail Group. This is the Zika graded spaceship you have ordered. In accordance with your requirement, we have not named the ship and have officially transferred the naming rights to you. Do you find the ship satisfactory? If you are, kindly enter the ship to acknowledge us your acceptance and provide your signature after. You are also entitled to our maintenance service across the galaxies, regarding that please refer to the terms and conditions stored in the processor of your spaceship." Briefed the young man politely.

"Mhm." Nodded Ye Chong, as he boarded the spaceship under young man's lead. At the main processor Ye Chong took out his identity card to activate anti-theft verification system. He inserted the card to the system and then he was prompted by the processor, stating that the scan had been completed.

The young man took a silvery tablet with a size of a palm out of his shirt. Within a few taps he made, the tablet enlarged to a size of a table, floating before Ye Chong. Beep! Red light flashed and words appeared on the screen gradually. It turned out to be a trade contract. The young man then passed Ye Chong a laser stylus. He signed gracefully, the pseudonym of his, Gu Wei and gained the

ownership officially.

"Good bye, have a nice trip." The young man then bade him farewell and left.

Ye Chong looked at this giant spaceship. He began weaving around the rooms, it had been quite some time since he got this excited. This was in fact his very own spaceship, his first spaceship! Zika graded spaceships were not that colossal kind but its length of 5km still sufficed to be considered as the larger one among the spaceships.

"So Ye, what do you think we should call this spaceship?" Shang was joyful, seeing how thrilled Ye Chong was.

"We need a name for a spaceship?" Ye Chong was bewildered.

"Of course, don't you remember how Fred that old bum also named his beauty as 'The Sabre'?" Illustrated a real example, Shang stated.

"Well then, 'The One'. There, done." Ye found the name to be the most easiest to remember.

Certainly Shang the poet would strongly refuse his suggestion, "Ye, how could you give such a senseless name to this baby? No, no, no, absolutely no. I won't allow this name."

"Well, take that task for me," he waved his hands. Ye Chong did not care. Naming was a silly thing to him anyway.

The spaceship was too spacious inside, even Mu Shang could fly freely, let alone for Ye Chong to walk.

"Ye, head to the main processor at the Captain's room. There's a blueprint for the modification. Mu made it. Mhm, the operating system of this spaceship has been changed by Mu. So, don't worry about the security issues, hehehe." Said Shang.

Modification? That word struck a glow of fire inside Ye Chong, and it was a plan made by Mu! He ran to the Captain's room

straightaway.

The Captain's room was expected to accommodate 80 men under normal circumstance. It felt empty with only Ye Chong standing there.

Ye Chong walked to the main processor again. Tick! A blueprint sprang out of the processor. That justified the fact that Mu and Shang had taken full control of the ship. Without both of them, Ye Chong believed it would be hard for him to even turn on the engine. Well normally, to pilot a Zika spaceship, one would require a team of 20 to perform simultaneous coordination of the entire ship.

Ye Chong's eyes were stuck on the blueprint.

The design was truly amazing, as expected from Mu! Exclaimed Ye Chong.

The first stark difference was the addition of a few new rooms, being a mini metal research laboratory, a mini alchemy room, a mini modification room and a mech training field. And that was only the first.

The super intensive, insane, impeccable shopping festival for Ye Chong commenced! Mu had charged his identity card with a huge amount of money, which Ye Chong had zero concern on its source and the way it got to his card. And that was when Shang announced the name of this ship, "The Coxcomb!" He sounded rather animated when he mentioned it, although both Mu and Ye Chong did not really care. Their attitude was neutral and of total indifference. "Dang..." And Shang was depressed for once.

Okay... so on "The Coxcomb", the space was facilitated with advanced communicative devices which allowed access to the Virtual World. Mu guided Ye Chong to log into the network system and they purchased boxes after boxes of apparatus and materials, along with some daily life necessities.

The figure was ticking fast on Ye Chong's "own" bank account, even though he did not feel anything in particular. He only saw the piles in his ship increased day by day. The engineering mech he purchased was finally put into good use. He had spent the next few days being a porter with the machines. Of course, Shang could not get away from this tedious task, though both Mu and he had lost an arm on their actual body, which resulted a much lower efficiency compared to Ye Chong.

The "festival" lasted for literally 5 days. And Ye Chong could stop at last after purchasing everything on the list. Luckily the Coxcomb had a storage sufficient to accommodate all these, since the things he bought were already giving him headache in the first place.

Chapter 209: My Life as a Spaceship Owner

II

Ye Chong began his tough task of handling these mountains of items he had purchased. Mu took over control as Shang could be killed by the boredom of the task.

The 3 largest rooms were made into metal research lab, alchemy room and mod room respectively and the surrounding rooms around the main control room had been made as the storage, where the mountains of things had been transferred to.

The metal research lab was not huge but was luxuriously facilitated. Ye Chong was not familiar with metallurgy. Mu made the choices of facilities, which all of them happened to be the most avant-garde models in the market. Well that came with a price, which remained unknown to Ye Chong as all he did was tap his identity card on the paying machine. Frankly speaking, he never checked out the price tag when he took them to the counter. He would be learning metallurgy here, since Mu was quite the expert in it.

The alchemy room, also a laboratory precisely speaking, was fully designed by Ye Chong himself. He had been learning the theoretical aspect of the study but never once he had been exposed to hand-on experience. Now with this new alchemist lab, he could perform all sorts of alchemy experiments. And well, those apparatuses inside the lab would be driving any alchemist mad on first sight. Self-controlled cultivation machine, thermostatic plasma room, duo enzymic mixer... all these luxuries that could only be found in the top laboratories were sitting right inside Ye Chong's lab.

The modification room was the largest among them, which did not only contain a range of devices for mech modification, but also had a set of equipment for skeleton parts production. That was the

tricky part however as there was no equipment dedicated for skeleton parts production in the market. Most of the time Ye Chong had to make them from scratch. Thankfully the devices sold in the market were of extreme variety that the mod room Ye Chong owned was way better than the top mod room he used to have at Blue Ocean Academy. As most devices were solely available on pre-order basis, he had to bear with the standard procedure of pre-ordering and waiting. The arrival was still pretty far away from him.

Finally, the 3 essential rooms were formed. A sigh of relief from Ye Chong, although he was probably a million light years away from completion. These apparatuses he purchased from the market were not perfect in Mu's eyes, as he provided a list of suggestion on modification to each apparatus. No doubt the list took a moment of discussion between Mu and Ye Chong and Ye Chong learned something from it.

Apparatus modification was way more than a simple change of nut to bolt, as these machines were already densely circuited in the beginning. A slight inaccuracy, a slip of the hand could permanently damage the machine. The demand of cautious accuracy was not something Ye Chong used to. But his learning capabilities helped him out. After destroying a few apparatuses, he mastered the unconventional method of operating them. Ye Chong was expected to have much refined technique in handling these machines compared to the times before. Of course, to make this kind of operation a habitual one, the cost he had to bear was unimaginable for most men.

Okay... Phase 1 completed. The 3 rooms were furnished. Then... the mech training room, that would be easier. Ye Chong picked the largest storage and placed the training equipments in. Done. Ye Chong could no longer improve his piloting skills by merely striving for mastery. He got to take accuracy.

Ye Chong proceeded to Phase 2.

Phase 1 felt so angelic and harmless the moment he began the Phase 2 of the modification. It involved modification on the weaponry itself, as Ye Chong stood before the offensive system of the spaceship. He staggered. Those matrixes were just the few of the simpler types of simulation of the offenses for ships Mu claimed he could find inside the databank. He was obliged to build it since the Coxcomb would be naturally a giant bee comb if they were to encounter any foes who would fire at them. Ye Chong would have to succumb to piloting his mech to try fighting back, abandoning the spaceship in the end.

Even though the 5 major galaxies had clearly prohibited the research and development of space warship, Ye Chong did not seem to be bounded by the terms at all. MPA owned a Double Moon Corvette while Black Coves and Sanctuary also had their own warships. Probably even the Prometheus Group owned a handful of warships as well.

Ye Chong would absolutely agree to any kind of modification as long as it would increase the chances of safety. I guard my own safety! And my safety guards my own fate!

And then there Ye Chong was, stumbled upon the modification process, as he realized the process turned out to be the hardest part of the entire plan.

This was the first time Ye Chong was exposed to the firepower aspect of the system, and he realized that he could not understand the simulation at all. He was familiar with the firepower, of the mech that is. The weaponry of a spaceship was grander and more complicated than the one on mech. It would be unrealistic for Ye Chong to master the working behind spaceship weaponry. The vastness of knowledge behind the simple-looking system would be something one would take forever to capture and be unable to see the end.

But, one does not understand the weaponry would not mean one is unable to make it, especially when one has Mu by the side.

The whole operation was broken down into several hundred steps by Mu, in which the detailed instructions were specified. Ye Chong only had to follow the steps exactly the way they were written. Mu would be supervising at the side. So for the completion of this phase, Ye Chong was totally confident.

The vital component of the entire system would be the installation of electromagnetic cannon, specifically the tubes. Electromagnetic cannons would fire up after a very brief moment of charging immense energy. So the tubes would be essential for they must be able to withstand the density of the forces without transmutation occurring during the process. Any ordinary metal would have melted before the ammo got fired.

The metal lab had a storage which kept countless premium ores and Ye Chong suddenly remembered that, Mu seemed to know formula of multiple kinds of strange alloys. As expected, Mu took out a piece of black gold ore, with a diameter about half a meter. Ye Chong had once collected a massive amount of black gold ores at the asteroid belt surrounding the Black Coves, since those ores were the specialty of the planet, with excellent stats and were used in the masks of the Black Covers and their mechs.

The ores were convincingly heavy. It took a moment for Ye Chong to lift it up, carried it a few steps unsteadily and tossed it into the Magnetron-based metal separator that he had bought. He turned back and looked at Mu, who was standing there and did not intend to take out another piece apparently.

"Mu, that's it?" Asked Ye Chong in peculiarity, "Is one piece enough?"

"Mhm, it's more than sufficient. Producing tubes for an electromagnetic cannon using black gold is already considered as a form of resources wastage itself. It is a shame that we do not have lightning stone or extracted crystal reactance in possession, while we would run out of material assuming we are making tubes for nanowave cannon instead." Mu seemed rather helpless when he

was unable to carry out the optimal route available.

Ye Chong simply did not recognize the rarity of black gold to understand the context. The war machine of the Black Coves, like Cosmic Flare for example, contained only a little amount of black gold. Similarly the amount of black gold in the masks was hardly noticeable. If it was not that strange space whirlpool which dragged Ye Chong to the depth of the asteroid belt, he would never be able to collect black gold this much.

Zink! Zink! Zink! Ye Chong could feel the slight vibration from the little window on the separating machine. Shush! And there he saw the piece of black gold being fully transformed into a pile of black powder, which veiled the inside of the machine in black mist. Very quickly after droplets of black liquid splashed over the window and flowed downwards to form a black glossy stream. The inside of the machine was rather bizarre for it was hardly tainted by the liquid.

The liquid flowed smoothly over the surface and collected at one point, eventually condensed into a piece of metallic cube. Ye Chong opened the window and held it in his hand. It was hefty... strangely hefty, glossing in dark.

Ye Chong, under the further instruction of Mu, placed the crystallized black gold into the other alloys he bought from the market. The lab was of minimalist design, so he had to make the tubes one by one. He was a little clumsy at first but he managed to keep up several tubes later and he started to feel really easy with the apparatuses in the lab. Although he had no idea how most of them worked theoretically, at least he knew how to operate them.

52 electromagnetic tubes piled at one corner. Their darkness would chill one from both the outside and the inside. The polished body felt cold in the hands. Compared to those tubes popping out from the factory every few seconds, these tubes were the handmade superior products from the lab. Inevitably, the cost would also be a few times of the mass-manufactured products.

That was never the 3 musketeers' concern however.

Next up, the launcher production, then the platter for electromagnetic system, the connection of the circuits... Pant... Ye Chong was half dead. Those tasks were not for humans! Really! One could tell the tediousness of the tasks seeing how a superman like Ye Chong collapsed.

Pant... Pant... Relieved Ye Chong. Now, one last step. The installation. Mu had already set up an installation plan for this as well. According to his calculation, the 52 tubes could cover up the entire body of the ship. There would not be blind spot opened for vulnerabilities. Mu could not be one strength to lift the tubes this time. Ye Chong hopped onto an engineering mech and set his work running. Installing the tubes was nothing after all the things he had been through producing the tubes.

He ran through the locations marked by Mu. Those placements were all designed as a concealed gun chamber by nature, so Coxcomb did not look particularly different post installation. Any passerby would have assumed this being an ordinary, harmless Zika spaceship upon first glance.

The electromagnetic cannons were the important component, one of the important components that is. What scattered throughout the corners of the warship was the 180 laser firing devices, which operated at a high reaction speed, with agile movements, forming a large coverage of Coxcomb's firepower about 50 km. This design was aimed to attack any approaching mech detected. At least the lasers were easily available in the market, as most mechs would use them. When Ye Chong placed the order at the counter in his usual nonchalance, the shopkeeper really assumed him being a staff of some major mech manufacturer.

If Shang was known for his creativity, Mu would be known for his great attention to details. His plans were well connected, with one point supporting the other, like a net that would raid anybody

in his aim. It would be horrible if Mu ever turned his firearm over you. Mu's characteristic was demonstrated clearly over his design on the offenses of the ship.

There were also countless grenade launchers paired with the laser firing devices, as inspired by the vase-shaped grenade launcher of Yu Di. Those waves of supplementary explosives were exceptionally helpful in a battle. Combining with the laser firers, It would surely be a deadly pool if any mech were to approach the Coxcomb.

The process of installing the firearms was rather boring, since most of the things did not make sense to Ye Chong. The one joy he got to experience was to prepare these colorful supplementary explosives. Fred was great. He saluted. Despite his age, he was still that resourceful and creative.

So, we finally finished the offensive system! The interior of the Coxcomb had undergone an overhaul, transforming into a real warship, a fearsome warship! Ye Chong spent literally a month on the building, which was beyond his estimation. He looked at the pile of junks, the remnants from his renovation. It was a headache as those were an absolute failure. He then tossed all of them into the crucible and made them into alloy cubes. That would be easier for storage. He had to keep the place clean since Shang had been nagging at it.

He once commented that, "The Coxcomb is the butcher disguised in his handsome look!"

Phase 3 of the modification... well Ye Chong felt the need to take a break temporarily. Coxcomb was too strong at his offenses while having nearly zero defenses, as his armor was never meant for warring, one could imagine the ship sinking in a few bombardments. But Zika spaceship was known for its size, changing the armor of the ship would be a astronomical operation to work on. Ye Chong could never complete it only by himself. The second astronomical thing would be amount of rare materials Mu

required to match the standard. Ye Chong was not a member of the three forces, he did have a storage of them but those were not going to be sufficient to even plate the tip of the ship. Most of the materials were non-existent in the market as well, even though these materials were considered the lettuce and cucumbers if Ye Chong was still at Nine Gates City.

Regarding the possession of resources, Ye Chong was a beggar compared to those forces in 5 major galaxies.

But whether the three forces being filthy richer than him in resources, why would he care? Not like he would get a share.

Anyway, save the talking, the ship was finally done. For the engines of the Coxcombs, they were not that bad, even though Mu had several plans on modification, it would be unrealistic to perform it right now. So Mu, the rational one who foresaw the unequal cost and effect behind this, scrapped the plan.

Ye Chong planned to leave Windstar and make a direct travel to Rainbow after this. It took him way too long to do the basic modification on his giant whale. He felt the time was well spent nevertheless, since being well prepared would mean being likelier to succeed. And he believed that Coxcomb was no longer a warship, it had evolved into a space base. Ye Chong even imagined his life wandering on the warship if he never could find a planet that was good enough to stay. It was not that bad.

Based on the galactic map... Oh! Ye Chong surprisingly found out the Rainbow planet being rather close to the Trash Planet, which further convinced him the fact that this Gao Shichang from Prometheus Group could truly be his papa. He was excited. Well, it is natural for humans to lose their calmness and rationality over their beloved.

And he remembered the fact that his papa was also quite a prodigy in mechs. Then probably Gao Shichang from the corp could very much be his papa.

Well, those were just speculations. If he wanted to verify his speculation, he had to pursue it.

Chapter 210: I Came to Rescue

After they had stocked a variety of supplies, the Coxcomb finally departed from Windstar. Coxcomb was not that prominent in the midst of the busy flock of spaceships landing and departing. Zika graded spaceships could be gigantic, but every organization who came to aid the pitiful residents on Windstar had much greater budget than Ye Chong, as shown by their even more gigantic rides; gigantic spaceships could be a rare sight on the street, as one would not see them running day by day like the mechs, still it was not that rare.

That would be it. The premises were in the favor of Ye Chong. He had never disliked neglects by the others, well, only Shang would love being all cool and showered by attention, "The Coxcomb is the coolest spaceship, everyone should see and appreciate it!"

Anyway, the Coxcomb travelled smoothly off the pier. They left Windstar silently.

In the boundless space, the Coxcomb floated like a soundless whale.

Ye Chong was overjoyed as there were so many things to do. Intergalactic travel could be something really time-consuming and mundane, especially when the journey between Windstar and Rainbow was exceedingly long. Even if Ye Chong owned the Coxcomb and had installed it with the best engines he got, it still was going to take some time.

It came a long way and it would be considered agonizing to most people, except for Ye Chong, who found this being quite normal. After the phases of the major warship transformation he performed not too long ago, he had gotten pretty much used to the apparatuses in the metallurgy laboratory. And he realized he was in dire need to get an useable mech, in public of course, that could provide camouflage to his identity. So he got to create a mech as

well. The tools and the materials he had in the room were more than sufficient to make a mech.

Since the mech was merely made for camouflage purpose, he did not need to invest too much on it. He then took inspirations from all sorts of models, a little here and there, which formed a rather odd design plan in the end. The body was given a striped finish with colored patches. It looked like a pierrot, or in layman's terms, a clown. Ye Chong believed it would be a very good camouflage, since the accessories were all from the market, nobody would have suspected it being a specialty from the three forces or the unknown.

The mech, despite its design being jumbled up from everything in the storage, had its essential parts improvised. Those parts were the only parts Ye Chong needed to touch. The remaining mixture of design was just something he could disregard.

"The Puppet", named by Ye Chong. And no doubt, the name was given a roaring laugh at. "You sure, Ye? Hahahahahahaha..." Shang had been ridiculing the name for the following hour. Ye Chong found the name to be quite befitting to the mech though. The parts of the Puppet were common enough, yet it was something truly from the experiment, for the experiment, by the experiment.

Ye Chong was having so much fun at the metallurgy lab. It was practically useful. The processor was amazing, that he just had to give a few tap on the screen to provide the visuals of every part and designate the sizing, then he would add in the ingredients. Pop! The part would come out in no time. Ye Chong was astounded as the capability of the processor had indicated that his thoughts could come into reality right away. He had ample alloys in his storage so he began messing with them, creating parts of all kinds. The Puppet would take everything in the end, it would be the conglomeration, a representation of Ye Chong's storage.

The colorful mech did in fact look like a clown, but Ye Chong would not mind. If anyone were to look down upon the mech, that

person would be making a deadly mistake. Ye Chong had installed miniature engines at every joint of the Puppet, to ensure it could set motion in minimal range to provide better offenses. Of course the shooting chambers were in the body as well, to cover the ground. Technically, the chambers were only a backup addition, since who knows when would Ye Chong ever really need to use the chambers to save himself?

The Puppet wielded a pair of parrying spears. It was a strange sight to see such a petite figure waving two oversized spears, although one must admit that it looked pretty disturbing. The two spears were the true killing weapons for Ye Chong. As long as the foes he encountered were from neither of the three forces, with his skills, the pair of spears would be more than enough to keep him alive. If anything would go wrong, Ye Chong would not hesitate to activate Han Jia or the Guardian right away.

The excess nuts and bolts were sent back to the crucible to be made into alloy cubes. And once again, the advantage of using metals as material was demonstrated, its recyclability of course, which was something skeleton materials could hardly compete with. But, one must bear in mind that not every single piece of metal was fine to be recycled, the scrapped metals on Trash Planet for example, the cost to recycle them was too high, which gave a discouraging return, so nobody would recycle them.

From this point, one could tell the standing of skeleton and metallic materials. Metallic materials were more common in application but skeleton materials possessed an extremely unique characteristic which metallic material could never imitate. The catch was, to produce a skeleton part, one would be required a long chain of procedures, longer than any layman would have imagined, which had determined the fate that skeleton mechs could never become common among the pilots.

If the metallurgy experts ever came to Ye Chong's lab and saw how he used those apparatuses as if he was baking a cake, they

would go nuts on spot for those apparatuses were something they would drool upon. Those apparatuses, for any metallurgy researcher or organization, were some of the most advanced kinds.

Ye Chong indulged himself in researches, as he moved around daily like a researcher. He spent the following days at the 3 research rooms he owned. Other than metallurgy, the alchemy was getting his attention as well. As he learned more stuffs from the microchip, he started to get a hold of the way to make offenses using alchemy. And Ye Chong could relate it to how Lunatic Guan treated him at the last occasion they met, it was still fresh in his mind, the sorcery. It was common for alchemists to venture into the woods, so they must have a few tricks in the sleeves to warrant their safety.

Ye Chong always caught the keys very quickly the moment the research involved offenses, for some reason. It was as if Ye Chong was born to war.

Since he owned an alchemy lab, he could perform some experiments. Unfortunately, those precious plants were not something he could purchase straight from the market. Ye Chong would have to head into woods to pluck them himself. The system designed by Lunatic Guan was noticeably different from the mainstream studies in the institutes today, on the choice of materials especially. A few of the ingredients were not that precious but it would require Ye Chong to perform additional procedures to fit them into the formation. In other words, the alchemists would have to do everything on their own, rather than being $1+1=2$, the alchemist would need to build that 1, that +, that = and that 2 from scratch in exchange of being able to use a different, more common material.

Luckily Ye Chong had grown on this study, so he did not find the procedures troublesome or whatsoever. Compared to the hassles he had to deal with whenever he made a skeleton part, these procedures were fine.

"Ye!" Mu's voice rang at the communicator.

Ye Chong placed down the tubes, "Mu, what's wrong?" he lifted his bed and asked, anticipating something as Mu would never interrupt him if nothing had happened.

Ye Chong after experiencing different kinds of apocalypses repetitively, had gained the serenity in any situation.

"We had just received a SOS signal from somewhere. Someone is being attacked by the pirates apparently. The location happened to be on our course." Mu had planned a direct course to Rainbow in the first place, since they were in a kind of hurry. Well it was a path known to be lurked by something but Ye Chong never feared them judging by the capabilities of the Coxcomb.

"Mhm," pondered Ye Chong.

"And they are already within our detected proximity. This is the visual the camera had obtained," added Mu, then a visual was prompted in front of Ye Chong, via the processor.

Two mechs were shielding for the few engineering models behind. They seemed to be suffering. Ye Chong could tell the two mechs being some above-average pilots in the galaxies.

The pirates on the other hand... were unexpectedly small numbered, only 15 of them. It was literally child's play compared to the time he fought with the whole gang of Red Beard's Owl.

The 15 mechs were obviously not greenhorns. They recognized the potency of the two mechs holding their invasion, so they did not fight on full force. They wandered instead, like a pack of hungry wolves, surrounding the lambs. The two mechs knew the pirates' blatant aim but all they could do was to constantly fire their lasers to keep the pirates away. It turned out to be a sticky situation, as one was struggling without plan, another was grumbling with plan. The gang would only have to wait, till the moment the lambs ran out of energy to fight back, they would gash

upon them, a feast they called.

And as the Coxcomb approached the group, they immediately caught on the situation.

The pirates flinched, as they knew that a spaceship was not something owned by the nobody, there had to be at least 150 sailors in the ship. They would be severely outnumbered! So without an order, they already had their own consensus, they would raid, seize and run! They launched attacks frantically on their preys, striving to capture them before the pilots on the spaceship arrived at the scene. Once they could run, they would succeed, since a tortoise like the spaceship shall never be able to catch up with them.

The speed of a spaceship was much slower compared to the mech. Coxcomb for example, only ran at a pitiful speed of Mach 3, compared to those mechs that went easily Mach 5 or 6, Coxcomb was indeed a tortoise. By the way, the Guardian could hit Mach 10 in burst running mode while Han Jia could go Mach 9.

The two mechs panicked, as they knew if it was not the pirates wanted their mechs as part of the loots, they would have become the beehives.

"Eh?" Mu seemed to have discovered something.

"What was it, Mu?" asked Ye Chong hurriedly, to make a cry for a fully logical, non-expressive AI like Mu, it must be some major discovery.

"Go save them, Ye. They have something good on them." The slight excitement between the words had explained Ye Chong a thousand words, that "something good" would mean something really good. It had to be rare for it could excite Mu.

"Mhm," responded Ye Chong, as he immediately deployed the Puppet. He rolled into the cabin. The spaceship was spacious enough to accommodate the entire deployment. Well, naturally

that would also mean the immense requirement on the piloting skill, to be able to fly out without hitting on anything.

Tai Zuo, one pilot of the two mechs, were tightened at their nerves. They were hitting their limits to stay this long. A little bit of distraction would have broken their protection. And then they heard their mate claiming to see a Zika spaceship flying towards them. Overjoyed he was, but... "Where're the backups? Why aren't the spaceship sending any help?"

Tai Zuo's heart was aching. If they were not going to send men anytime soon, he would be collapsing with Han Ben. Assuming there were only he and Han Ben, they were confident enough to break through this pack of wolves, but they also had a few non-combat members at their backs, so they could not take any reckless action that could hurt their mates. They could only guard, till death.

Ugghhhhh.....

?

Out of sudden, the pressure reduced. The force shield he and Han Ben was holding had turned lighter. He knew, with a smile, that the backups were already there.

There were only 10 mechs left before them. 5 for each of them. That was a significant reduction on workload. He was grinning, till he saw the screen.

He simply did not expect, of an army of a spaceship, only one mech was sent!

One mech? Why? Confused Tai Zuo. What for sending one mech when that one mech was likely to be slaughtered by the pirates? The pirates were more potent than he expected. As a lecturer of the pilot study from one of the top universities of the 5 major galaxies, he had the right to give these pirates a subjective rating - the pirates might had not undergone appropriate education, but they

were very, very experienced in actual fights. And their rapports were great, making them really a problem to deal with.

A 5 versus 1, even if that 1 was Tai Zuo himself, he would not dare to gamble.

The 5 mechs were approaching Ye Chong. He was calm. The Puppet was inexperienced of an outnumbered fight, but the pilot was fearless.

The 5 mechs spread towards Ye Chong like the edge of fan. In their eyes, this colored mech was as ridiculous as a clown, fluttering there, awaiting them to trample on it! "Gosh, did you see that mech?" "Kekekekekekekeke!" The pilots were exchanging laughter through the intercom of their mechs, as they also discussed on how they should dismantle the mech to demonstrate their fearsomeness towards the remaining crew on the spaceship.

As everyone was wondering why there was only a mech from the spaceship, the situation had gone mutation!

As soon as the clown entered the range of their firearms, it began accelerating, under the eyes of astonishment of the 5. The speed of the mech was ... was...

Too fast!

Exclaimed by the 5.

The sudden change was not something they could cope with in time. They were experienced at least, so they did not panic, even though they were shocked. One button, the shooting chamber bombarded at the mech. Well, that simple. 5 of them would work together and fire everything at once, it would cover everything. Moreover their laser beams were never aimed at the clown mech entirely, rather they focused on the gaps around it - to kill even the escape route they thought. It was a known technique among them, they had killed countless experts with this trick all these years.

Hahahahaha!

Everyone could imagine the frail clown mech being shot into a million pieces in an explosion, a firework to behold! Feeble armor, no shield, and they could not even see the clown mech holding any kind of weaponry. The barehanded clown was the scapegoat to be slaughtered in seconds!

Till then...

Chapter 211: Puppet

An odd twist! Dodged the beams, the clown mech easily span out of the way.

Eerie it was, as the 5 men rubbed their eyes in skepticism. How could that be possible?

How in the world did the mech curve away from the beams? They were all firing at once, trapping the clown in the area. It was not even the case of aiming once at a time. The clown mech should have failed to make an escape, yet the clown just twisted out of the area - a stark truth scorching their eyes, shattering their sense of reality.

This is against the law!

Tai Zuo was in dismay. He thought he had great eyes to help him comprehend the situation but his eyes merely captured the deceitful moment when the clown mech made a misleading gesture before the twist, it happened so fast he could not see clearly. He just understood the fact that the clown mech turned out to be a success, and such level of skill was giving the teacher of pilots cold sweat.

And the next movement of the clown mech was spine-freezing!

The clown mech used to ridicule them because of its amusing finish. Then this twist happened, the 5 men no longer felt amused. The clown mech made the second twist. A shake and the 5 men rotated along, repositioning themselves to keep the clown mech surrounded.

A rapid spin from the clown mech, as it effortlessly escaped from their grip. Leaped the clown mech, it pounced upon one mech at the edge. "Holy!" Tai Zuo's stare intensified. That twisted turn was superb! A standard Thomas' Spin, just as illustrated in my textbook! Be it the moves, the timing, the pilot had performed it

perfectly!

Tai Zuo was not even confident enough to claim that he was able to do the same.

The movement went so habitually in his eyes, yet the perfection was the horror in the eyes of the 5 men.

Unpredictable, petrifying, the movement tinted the atmosphere with terror, as the clown mech glided like a phantom. The colorful clown mech looked like vengeful spirit by then, grooving its strange anatomy in their circle.

The Puppet traveled fast like a fired arrow towards the mech. Ye Chong knew the importance of motion to a mech, so even if the Puppet was a random toy he made, he provided it with the best engine.

It was boring. Ye Chong's face was straight. Battles like this no longer piqued his excitement. These were utter noobs compared to the Black Coves and the Sanctuary, even though he retained his caution, since it was not his habit to be reckless even if the foes were clearly inferior to his strength. Unlike the battle with the Black Coves, he was cautious but he was not disturbed.

The dodging style he adopted was a combination of Non-orderly Wavy Leap and Condensed Multiple Turnings. The Puppet might not be as frail as it appeared, still Ye Chong did not want to be shot as those mechs were fearsomely ranged attacking models.

The 5 pirates had their faces drained as they attempted to lock on the target. They realized they never managed to place their crosshairs right. The clown mech was behaving too confusingly. They fired a few times and they missed. It was depressing. No way, my aiming should not be this bad, what happened to me today? What is this bad luck haunting me? How could I not even land a single shot?

Tai Zuo was more alarmed than the pirates. He was the professor

for pilot studies, no one understood better the proficiency within that set of movements the clown mech performed, other than himself.

Terrible! This is too terrifying! Even he was terrified by the clown mech. He finally came to the understanding of the reason that from an entire gigantic Zika craft, only one mech was sent.

The answer is obvious. One mech was more than enough.

Well, the professor would never have imagined that there only Ye Chong himself on the Coxcomb, that was why only one mech was sent.

It was not the end of the show yet.

Ye Chong remained as calm as ever, despite getting closer to his foe.

Right before contact, Ye Chong's hands moved fast and bright. He did not feel anything particular with his speed since it had been quite sometime since he broke the cap of his hand movement speed.

The spears within the arms of the Puppet sprang into action upon contact. Sparked, the spears smooched the the machinery. A slide to the side, the clown mech swung like a breeze away from the mech.

Like who exactly is this person? Tai Zuo was dumbfounded and forgot the fact that he was also involved in the battlefield. The pirates were also shocked. The ever-moving flock of mechs eventually paused awkwardly.

Ye Chong disregarded the awkwardness and moved on. Once you are in the battlefield, you are supposed to stay 100% focus, no matter how weak the foes might have appeared. That was the rule to his fight.

Boom! An explosion occurred, as the mech which came in contact became a fireball. The glaring light illuminated the space,

highlighting the horrified expression of the men.

One more twist, the clown danced with its spears. The petite clown mech had taken the role of an assassin in darkness, where the patches of the greens reflected his amusement.

There was no plot twist to save those 4 mechs, as even the ability of running away had turned into a unreachable luxury. Tai Zuo saw 2 mechs, trying to run away, being skewed by the clown's spears. The spears oozed out of the murdered machineries. There was no glow on the cruel spears, even though they were made out of black gold alloys, the same one used for electromagnetic tubes production. Ye Chong was not happy with the eye-catching glow, so he exfoliated the surface.

No flashy move, only the most painful, brutal ones from the clown mech. The kind that would murder men in one blow, cutting away all the unnecessary struggles.

Cold sweat dripped off his face, as Tai Zuo heard the wavering whispers from Han Ben, "Zuo... this guy, he's spooky..." Even an iron man like Han Ben was frightened like a scalded cat.

It was a relief however, since the person had proven his or her expertise in handling this alone. Tai Zuo and his team could have their life guaranteed. Although he had not the slightest idea of the identity of the man leading this capable pilot on his throne at the Captain's room, at least it was better than getting engulfed by the pirates. He would rather end up with a potential savior than a pack of wild wolves.

The clown mech was quick as he finished off the remaining members in a matter of seconds. It went so smoothly and naturally that it almost felt like the pilot's routine. The pirates were utterly terrified by the clown mech's brutality. Their faces were screaming before they exploded and ended up as the one being dismantled instead.

The parrying spears waving in the hands were as if invisible, like

the scythe of the deadly reaper. Tai Zuo found the spears unusual however, as the mechs were immediately dismembered upon contact, despite their sturdy appearance. Why?

Basically it was the result of Ye Chong's in-depth understanding of anatomy of mechs combining with his accurate cleaving.

The clown mechs who had finished the remaining mechs, without hesitation, jumped at the deadlocked group. The turn still went like a twist, with indecipherable orbit. The clown mech behaved like a killing machine, frightening everyone in sight.

The 10 mechs ran away like animals on a forest fire however. A plot twist to Ye Chong it was. It was as if, they were being chased a demon clawing from hell.

The scene, where the clown stared coldly at the running pirates, felt like a disdainful look upon the insect on the ground in Tai Zuo's eyes.

The pirates dismissed themselves after seeing their partners being ruthlessly murdered by a clean killer. The clown mech stared on and did not intend to chase them after. Well Tai Zuo was not the kind of demanding person who would request the clown mech to hunt them down.

Very quickly after the clown mech approached the team and it came so naturally that it lifted its arm, signifying a welcoming attitude to board on the ship. They accepted the offer with pleasure of course, not like they had other choice. And that was when everyone stumbled upon the number of staff in the Zika graded ship the moment they got out of the cabins - there was one, and only one, being the owner of the corvette. His actual appearance was seen when he hopped out of the deadly clown, it was one man who expressed cold unfeelingness.

And who that man exactly was? For he owned a humongous spaceship all himself. No folk could have done that. Tai Zuo's ponder was swirling in his head.

"Follow me," the man spoke coldly as he began walking, without even taking a look at them. Well, as he had said, the team only could follow the lead hurriedly. Tai Zuo, being acutely observant, immediately noticed the fact that the man was indeed different from folks. His steps were of the same exact width, as if he had measured the distance he should walk. The top body was firm, there was no swing of his shoulders. Tai Zuo had a friend who also happened to be a practitioner, and surprisingly his friend walked the way this man lifted his steps. Don't tell me... he is also a practitioner...

"Oh my! Are you seeing what I'm seeing?!" As they passed one room, Phal shrieked upon discerning something really familiar to his eyes in the room, "Magnetron separator! See that?!" Phal looked exhilarated, as if he had landed on treasure island. He stormed into the room and hugged on that strange machine Tai Zuo had never seen before. A gentle touch on the surface, a tap on the handle, like a child of exploding curiosity, Phal was stuck. "Oh Phal..." Tai Zuo was having a headache. There's always time and place for this but not now! We are at somebody else's place! If the owner of the place doesn't like us, we are going to be skewed! Thought Tai Zuo. But well, Phal was the kind of researcher who behaved on pure innocence and curiosity, he only lacked the exposure to mannerism of the society. He glanced at Ye Chong, who seemed to be not reacting to his mate's misbehavior. What a relief... he thought.

Tai Zuo was not very much into the natural science but given that he had been spending at the academy for long enough, he could tell the room being a research laboratory. In addition, from that shocking reaction of Phal, this should be a very advanced laboratory. Phal the old guy was not that pleasing to the eyes but his standard was recognized by the institute, for he was the authority in the field of metallurgy and mineralogy.

And the mystery of this owner grew in the mind of Tai Zuo. The

fact that the man owned a giant spaceship showed that he should be from a rather strong family background, with feasible wealth. The truth that he won in a 1 on 5 fight against the pirates demonstrated his excellence in piloting. He swore that he would never find an expert like the man even from his own institute, the Mid-Alliance University, the known "cradle" for most pilots. And then there was the point that the person seemed to be a practitioner... "Well, maybe..." That was a wild guess from him. Moreover, he should be well-established in metallurgy and mineralogy. The lab gave him away. Lastly... he was calm throughout the event, even when Phal was acting like a fool in his lab filled with expensive devices. That just depicted his good-natured personality. He could control his temper like the back of his hands... Everything was terrifying for his age.

Provided that these characteristics were seen on an elderly, Tai Zuo would respond with respect. But no, it was on a young man, at most at his twenties. Now that is incomprehensible, he thought. Is there really, really... a genius this fearsome?

Ye Chong was not angered particularly. The elderly who ran into his lab abruptly could look a little shabby on his appearance but he seemed to be the same passionate kind towards his own research. If that was the case, Ye Chong would not dislike such person. Instead, he would portray admiration. He reminded him of the days he spent at Aurora, with the elderlies behaving the way this old man was in his lab.

Ye Chong held his steps and waited for Phal patiently.

Phal seemed to have lost himself over the marvelous technologies sitting in the lab, as he spun and danced around the separator.

Tai Zuo signaled Han Ben and Han Ben got it right away. He went to Phal. "Excuse me!" Boomed Han Ben, alerted Phal.

Everyone was watching Phal, whose face reddened out of embarrassment. He then waddled back to his mates. Ye Chong

started walking again after seeing the old man joined back to his teammates. They walked on. And Phal... constantly turning back to take one last glance at that separator, as if parting with his beloved.

Meng Fei'er, the second teammate of Tai Zuo, staggered when she passed the alchemy lab. The same emotional reaction as Phal, she was stupefied, excited but she was more well-behaved than Phal, even though she almost drooled on the sight. That thermostatic plasma room, that self-controlled cultivation machine, there was also a duo enzymic mixer?! She wondered if she was visiting the central alchemy research institute by mistake. Seriously, other than the institute, she could not imagine any other place having these precious.

She controlled her behavior. She held her excitement, although that flinch she made had already gotten Tai Zuo's attention. Tai Zuo slowed his steps and joined Meng Fei'er at the end of the walking team. Her sight rose over Ye Chong at the front, her head lowered, whispered, "He could be a chemist." Tai Zuo was the leader of the entire team. He was very experienced so everyone would give their feedback directly with dignity.

Tai Zuo's heart skipped a beat. A skinny young man owning all these while holding possibly a long list of profession on his resume... the mystery deepened, where the darkness looked back into Tai Zuo's eyes.

Chapter 212: Teardrop Mineralite

Ye Chong brought them to the bridge.

Ye Chong spoke plainly, "Everyone, you're safe now."

The people exhaled in relief, as tension finally drained out of them. Qin Zuo bowed to Ye Chong and thanked him profusely, "Thank you for your help, if not for you, we would all have ..." Qin Zuo shuddered at the thought, and was very grateful, but revealed nothing more, a testimony of his discretion.

In fact, Ye Chong had wanted to use violence - it was the simplest and most direct way to end things in the way he saw it. Even if it would sometimes worsen the situation, it was still mostly a reliable method. However, his considerable amount of time spent with Shang made Ye Chong understand that violence was not the only answer, and that there were far more craftier solutions.

Of course, even if he understood this, practicing it was an entirely different matter. Till today, Ye Chong still preferred direct means to achieve his goals.

"Alright, I'll not mince words here, I offered help only because I'm interested in your research. I think you must all be open to sharing your findings with me." Ye Chong still spoke casually, as if he was only commenting on the weather.

Indeed, Shang was slowly changing Ye Chong. In a certain corner, a devil was flicking away its forked tail, howling in excitement, while Mu provided commentary on the side, "Vocal tone has exacerbated the situation, effectiveness has dropped by 0.37 percent."

The difference between Mu and Shang was that Mu would focus on the precision and angle of a weapon in hand, while Shang preferred the cunningness of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Ye Chong's words were as chilling as an autumn breeze, and

everyone instantly fell silent. They never expected to escape from certain danger, only to be greeted with another. It was their first time hearing a threat delivered so plainly.

Besides, how did the other party get his information? They had kept their movements inconspicuous, certain that no one had found them out. The fact was shocking. Phal's face was red with anger, his eyes spitting fire. Qin Zuo groaned inside. Now that the other party had so clearly stated his intention, he must know all about them. Could this mysterious person be targeting them from the start?

However, Qin Zuo did not have the luxury to consider any further. Since the other party had been so frank, he must be prepared for them.

Besides, the young man was very calm when he dealt with those five mechs earlier. Qin Zuo believed that the young man was not a stranger to murder. They must surely look like five little lambs ready for slaughter to him.

Qin Zuo considered all these quickly, and understood the situation they were in. He sighed. Under the circumstances, their lives were more important than anything else.

Zuo Qin looked to Meng Fei'er, who was watching him, and shook his head in defeat.

Meng Fei'er tightened her lips and looked towards Ye Chong with angry and unwilling eyes, but her right arm moved to remove her backpack, and she emptied her bag onto the floor. Pa'er gritted his teeth in anger, but Vicente seemed to be unaffected.

Ye Chong ignored their fury with ease. He bent over and inspected the rocks and tools emptied by Meng Fei'er from her backpack on the floor.

Ye Chong sorted through the things on the floor quickly, grouping them by category. His actions surprised Qin Zuo and his

team - could this young man recognize all those things?

They exchanged glances, and Qin Zuo signalled to Meng Fei'er.

Meng Fei'er hesitated for a moment before speaking up, "Do you know these things?" Meng Fei'er spoke with a sweet, clear voice. Meng Fei'er was the team's medic, and a teacher from the Unity Academy. Her specialty was alchemy, but she also studied botany on the side. Meng Fei'er was about 25, at an age where a woman was in her prime. Her natural charisma and her feminine and sympathetic nature made her well liked in the academy by students and teachers alike. When dealing with strangers, Meng Fei'er was good at winning their hearts.

Qin Zuo knew this, for many people would unconsciously be less defensive against women. While he could not hope for the young man to release them all, he would still try his best to lower the other party's guard by any means. The more unguarded the other party was, the more likely they were to escape.

Nonetheless, Ye Chong was not listening to Meng Fei'er. He was having a lively discussion with Mu.

"This is carmine, a rare mineral, able to amplify energy, commonly used in large energy based weapons as firing parts.

"This is a nimbus rock. It looks attractive, though not quite useful for our purposes, but it's excellent material for construction.

"This green one is an emerald crystallite, mainly used for jewellery and decorations. It's a kind of gemstone, rarely found in the Five Galaxies. I've never seen any reports of this. Cutting this kind of gemstone requires high craftsmanship."

Ye Chong organized the rocks on the floor based on Mu's comments into two heaps, one useful for him, and the other irrelevant. In the end, he arrived at a rubbery piece that looked much like a water droplet. If not for his sharp eyes, Ye Chong

would probably have missed it.

The object emanated warmth in his hands! Ye Chong was deeply surprised.

Ye Chong asked, "Mu, what's this?"

Mu was quiet for awhile before replying, "It's a teardrop mineralite, formally known as high energy compound colloid."

From Mu's voice, Ye Chong could sense the unusualness of this teardrop-sized mineral. "Is this useful?"

Mu reverted to his usual composure. "It is. It is a material with the highest known energy density, and scarcer than even the Do Kun stone. Energy cells made of this material could store a lot more energy than usual. Besides, it has its own energy. Upon depletion, the material will become a good energy storage medium. Starships fitted with these energy cells of this can undertake very long voyages. Equipping a mech with this kind of energy cell can increase its combat strength by at least five times. Unfortunately, a small part of my database is damaged, and there is a gap in my knowledge on building energy cells from teardrop mineralite. If you're interested, you can try to complete this knowledge. Of course, we still lack some other materials required to build this energy cell, but as an important high grade mineral, this material is still worth keeping. We must also try to find our best to find more teardrop mineralite.

"In any case, it's better if this material is safely in our hands." Mu declared his conclusion with dominating prowess.

"Is that necessary?" Ye Chong asked, curious. He had never seen Mu placing as much importance on anything as this teardrop mineralite, even more than he did on Do Kun stone. The way Ye Chong saw it, it was an impossible feat. He might believe it possible for one of the Three Forces, but how could he alone own all the teardrop mineralite in the world?

"It's very necessary." Mu paused for a moment before continuing, "My database still has some information on the usage of teardrop mineralite energy cells. Based on this information, I conclude that mechs or warships fitted with this teardrop mineralite energy cell are terrifyingly powerful. Be it Black Cove, the Sanctuary or the MPA, obtaining the teardrop mineralite would allow them to expand their powers rapidly. The balance between the Three Forces will be disrupted, and that would be not favorable for you."

"But this is obviously an operation beyond our means. We don't have enough manpower, and we lack the experience in mining for minerals." Ye Chong could not understand why Mu would propose such an impossible mission.

Mu explained, "Unlike other minerals, teardrop mineralite is an aggregating mineral. Usually, it is found localized in a small area. If we locate where this team found this teardrop mineralite, the probability of finding more of it in the area is very high. Based on available information, planets mined for teardrop mineralite are all exhausted today, so these people must have found it on an untouched planet. With so many rare minerals, it's undeniable that this planet must have escaped the attention of Black Cove and the Three Forces till today, or the planet would have been seized. We must mine all the teardrop mineralite before any of them realize this. Teardrop mineralite is a resource like no other for war." Mu emphasized again at the end.

Ye Chong quickly grasped his logic, and agreed that no matter which of the Three Forces came out the winner, it would not help his situation. While Ye Chong believed that he would settle himself on some planet after investigating the Prometheus Group, and that the chances of meeting the Three Forces again was low, but what if it happened anyway? This was a probabilistic event, and not entirely impossible. Instead of allowing this threat to exist, better to nip it in the bud.

Ye Chong quickly agreed with Mu's suggestion.

Meng Fei'er was surprised to find the young man ignoring her, fully occupied in organizing the things on the floor. All the minerals were grouped into different heaps, and now he was starting to sort the plants that she had gathered. Meng Fei'er grew more and more intrigued by the young man. She had collected all those plants herself. As a botanist, it was imperative to study these previously unknown organisms. The young man before her, however, seemed to be familiar with these plants that were not recorded in any available illustrations of plants, and was now quickly sorting them based on their type.

Meng Fei'er now recalled that this young man seemed to be an alchemist, and as an alchemist, it was not uncommon for them to also be botanists.

Once he was done, Ye Chong finally straightened himself. From the beginning, Ye Chong had kept himself vigilant. It was already instinct for him to always prepare himself for any eventualities. Fortunately, the other party did not do anything unusual.

He was not aware of how much these people feared him, especially Qin Zuo. Qin Zuo was the most insightful of the team, and that was why he dreaded Ye Chong even more than the others.

Ye Chong gathered all the materials that were useless to him and pushed them towards Meng Fei'er as he said plainly, "These are not useful to me, you can take them back." Ye Chong did not seem embarrassed at all, as though everything was his in the first place.

The team largely ignored his demeanor, and Pa'er finally could not resist asking him loudly with bulging eyes, "Young man, do you know these minerals?" Seeing Pa'er making his move, everyone else kept silent and looked towards Ye Chong.

Ye Chong was calm as ever as he replied, "I do."

The team stared in disbelief. Pa'er picked up one of the minerals from the heap he returned to them, a light grey rock, and asked urgently, "What is this?"

"That's a nimbus rock, good for construction. It's a strong material, suitable to be mixed in with a wide range of binding materials. It has particularly good performance in structure and strength."

Pa'er immediately opened his auto-recording system. Ye Chong's confidence as he spoke had already mostly convinced Pa'er. As an eminent mineralogist, he could tell that Ye Chong was probably right, even though Pa'er had only seen this material for the first time.

Pa'er now acted like an enthusiastic student, listening intently, only that his teacher was a young man at least a decade younger than him.

Pa'er picked up another mineral and asked eagerly, "What about this?"

Ye Chong did not answer this time, but looked at the team and said calmly, "I think I'll be able to tell you all more about these minerals, but I believe you should all share your information with me too." Qin Zuo felt growing doubt on his earlier conclusion. He had thought that the young man was a genius in the natural sciences and mech maneuvering, but now he looked more like a young heir to a large business conglomerate, all hypocritical without shame, but still acting naturally throughout.

In any case, Ye Chong seemed even more powerful to him. He still could not make much of the 20-odd young man, but from what little he could gleam. Qin Zuo knew that his team was disproportionately at a disadvantage.

Even so, a certain devil with his flickering tail grew even more delighted with Ye Chong, while Mu still maintained his calm observer stance.

Ye Chong finally got to know who these five people were.

Chapter 213: Alliance

The team of five were all teachers from Unity Academy. Qin Zuo and Han Ben were from the mech faculty, responsible for their safety. The quiet Vicente was a geography lecturer, Phal was a lecturer in mineralogy and metals, while Meng Fei'er was a lecturer in alchemy.

Unity Academy was a reputable tertiary education institution in the Five Galaxies, and most people revered its high standing. Unity Academy's teachers were also widely respected.

The young man before them, however, seemed unmoved. This calm composure seen in an adolescent only alerted Qin Zuo even more.

The young man's calm gaze seemed to penetrate their hearts, as though no lies could ever escape him.

Everyone was wondering if this calm youngster was actually the same person as that shameless young man earlier.

In truth, they had misjudged Ye Chong. Ye Chong was only imitating Shang's way of speaking. In Ye Chong's mind, there was no such thing as honour or shame. The way he saw it, he was the stronger of them both, and it was only natural if he took everything the team had. The laws of the Five Galaxies did not play a role in his actions.

Under Ye Chong's scrutiny, Meng Fei'er explained everything.

Vicente had a student who was an explorer. In truth, the number of explorers were always increasing. In the age of peace, people needed heroes, and in the age without heroes, these explorers were modeled by the media as heroes. The potential profits in this occupation made it even more attractive. Once anyone found a primary planet never before explored, then by law, he or she was entitled to own a tenth of the planet's resources. While people

nowadays did not lack for basic necessities, the quest for wealth and power never ceased.

When this student brought his findings to Vicente, Vicente was shocked. As a geographer, he found geographical features that he had never seen before in his student's holographic recording. Hence, he organised this expedition.

Ye Chong was surprised to find that their expedition was actually initiated by the quiet, old man. Phal was a prominent specialist in mineralogy and metals, while Meng Fei'er was not as famous, her track record as a competent botanist who once studied under well known experts and her medical expertise made her a part of the team. Qin Zuo and Han Ben were partners. They worked well together and had much experience in explorations. Thus, they became in charge of protecting and guiding the team in their expedition.

The exploration team was reasonably prepared. Since primary planets usually have wild animals, Qin Zuo and Han Ben could keep them safe.

Everything was arranged in secret. Vicente's student never contacted him since, but considering that if news leaked out, Vicente's student would lose everything, everyone kept their silence.

Their meticulous planning resulted in a smooth expedition. The primary planet was much larger than they had ever imagined, and was significantly evolved. For safety reasons, they only did a surface inspection of the planet. Even so, they found minerals that they had never seen before. With the exception of Qin Zuo and Han Ben, everyone gained much from the expedition. They hoped to return to the academy as soon as possible, where they had their own laboratories to process their findings.

Everything went smoothly, and just when they thought things were going perfectly, the space pirates arrived.

And they were saved by Ye Chong.

Meng Fei'er finished her narration and looked silently at Ye Chong. In fact, all five members kept their eyes fixed on Ye Chong. This young man held their lives in his hands. They could disregard wealth and fame, but would never give up their lives so easily.

Ye Chong was quiet, obviously still processing the information he got from Meng Fei'er.

As expected, they had discovered a primary planet, just as Mu predicted. Everything seemed logical, and Ye Chong could find nothing amiss. Besides, Mu reported that Meng Fei'er's heartbeat was normal when she was speaking. Ye Chong could be assured that Meng Fei'er was not lying.

Perhaps to encourage independence, Mu did not lend much assistance to Ye Chong this time.

Ye Chong had two choices now. He could either investigate the Prometheus Group and Gao Shichang, or solve this problem of the teardrop mineralite. This was a difficult decision, and personally, Ye Chong would prefer to deal with the issue of his Papa first.

Ye Chong asked abruptly to Vicente, "You said your student never contacted you again?"

Vicente was startled, and nodded. "Yes, that's right. I waited, but he never got in touch."

"I see." Ye Chong nodded with a measure of resolution.

Vicente seemed to realize something, and his expression turned worse. "You mean ..."

Ye Chong only nodded and said, "It's only my conjecture." Ye Chong suspected that Vicente's student must have been targeted. If that was the case, he must move fast. It would not do to let others be ahead of him. Since Mu was so focused on this teardrop mineralite, Ye Chong could not afford to treat it lightly as well. As for the matter with his Papa, it was not as urgent. In that instant,

Ye Chong made his choice. Here, one could notice the influence of Mu's rational nature on Ye Chong. Even when it came to his beloved Papa, Ye Chong could still make the accurate and wiser choice.

Everyone else seemed confused, but Vicente was now looking very pale. Suddenly, tears ran down silently along his cheeks, and Vicente seemed to have aged a decade instantly.

Everyone was shocked, and gathered around Vicente, asking him what was the matter.

Qin Zuo was the second of the five to realize what Vicente was thinking. Qin Zuo looked at the steady young man with disbelief and asked, "You mean he's dead?"

As he said those words, everyone else finally understood, and were shocked to the core.

Ye Chong shook his head. "It's only a conjecture, and there's no way to confirm it at the moment. Besides, even if he was captured, chances are he's still alive. The one who captured him must have preferred him alive rather than dead. Of course, your student must be smart enough in the first place, then his chances of survival will be above 60 percent." Ye Chong was now speaking like Mu.

Vicente was moved, and his eyes glowed with renewed hope. Phal yelled, "We'll save him, we'll save him!"

Meng Fei'er quickly held him back and shook her head, signalling him to be quiet.

Qin Zuo could feel a headache coming. These people were in danger themselves, but still worried about the safety of someone else. He laughed mockingly at himself. However, he was the kind of person who would rise against a challenge, and the situation now only aroused his fighting spirit. Even so, a rescue operation was a fool's errand. They did not even know who was responsible, and out of the five, only he and Han Ben had any combat

capabilities. The other party, on the other hand, was probably an entire group. With only himself and Han Ben, Qin Zuo could not help his pessimism.

"They'll bring him to the primary planet. If we're lucky, we might meet them." Ye Chong said calmly.

Everyone looked towards Qin Zuo, the decision maker for the team all this while. Vicente did not speak up to disturb Qin Zuo's thoughts even though his student's life at stake. He understood that they were only his teammates, and were not obliged to be further involved.

Qin Zuo smiled wryly inside - what other choice did they have? He understood that the young man had led them to this conclusion, probably because he wanted to visit the primary planet himself. This young man might not be better than the ones who captured Vicente's student.

Qin Zuo considered for a moment before speaking seriously, "You want to visit the primary planet yourself, yes? I think you'll find no better guide than us. Even if we meet the other party, I hope you could lend your assistance and keep us safe." Qin Zuo had explained the importance of his team to Ye Chong, hinting that if Ye Chong could not keep them safe, he would never get anything more out of them about the primary planet. He chose to be frank instead, against this young man who thought he could not penetrate.

Ye Chong answered straightforwardly, "Alright."

In truth, Ye Chong had many other ways to get information out of them, such as Shang's interrogation methods. Even if a mentalist could not withstand it, Ye Chong believed that they would yield too.

However, Ye Chong was beginning to understand that direct methods were not always the simplest, and indirect methods were not always more troublesome. In terms of effectiveness, these

indirect methods were actually quite useful. In Ye Chong's mind, effectiveness and efficiency mattered the most, and methods were only a means to an end.

In any case, having the stronger position allowed him to be proactive. Ye Chong understood this deeply. Strength was the basis of everything.

With this temporary alliance established, everyone relaxed a little. At least they were safe now. The way the clown mech clashed against the five space pirates coldly was constantly on their minds.

After entering the location of the primary planet, Mu charted the fastest course towards the planet.

Ye Chong began to explain more about those minerals, imitating Mu.

Vicente and Phal listened closely, and interjected with questions. At the side was Meng Fei'er, waiting patiently for Ye Chong to finish explaining the minerals. She was more interested in the plant specimens she had collected.

Qin Zuo and Han Ben wandered around the starship.

Qin Zuo and Han Ben exchanged glances, and both could read the shock in each other's eyes. They had went through the captain's cabin in detail, and found no one other than Ye Chong and their team of five. The starship looked just like any other Zika class starship.

This was why they were so surprised. Starships and mechs were entirely different constructs. Mechs moved much faster than starships, but fared a lot worse in terms of long distance flight. Starships also had a feature that no mech ever had, which was warp jumping. Starships usually had this feature, which greatly shortened the travel time across space and made interstellar travel possible.

Without warp jumps, travelling between planets would take longer than a person's entire lifetime.

Starships may have features that mechs could never have, but it was proportionately more complicated to maneuver. A Zika class starship like this, for example, would need at least a crew of 20. Now, however, he and Han Ben saw no one steering the starship, and the starship was apparently flying on autopilot.

A starship with autopilot features! Qin Zuo was vexed. Who was this young man? How did he come to own such an advanced starship? Starship maneuvering required strict training, and the maneuvering itself was daunting to most people. Up until now, Qin Zuo had never heard of anything like starship auto piloting functions.

Who did he have as his backing? To own such advanced technology? It was terrifying!

Qin Zuo could not help but feel anxious again. Plenty of things in this starship could be considered classified material in any organization. Now that they had boarded the ship, perhaps ...

Qin Zuo did not like where his thoughts were leading to. He forcefully stopped himself from thinking about it any further, and quickly signaled to Han Ben. They settled in with the other three members of the team, sitting around the young man.

The actions of Qin Zuo and Han Ben did not escape Ye Chong's attention, but he kept silent about it, continuing on his explanation of the minerals to Phal and the others. Ye Chong could at least keep his promise to them, provided, of course, that he was not harmed in the process. Ye Chong was not yet willing to devote himself to that extent yet.

"This green one is an emerald crystallite, mainly used for jewellery and decorations. It's a kind of gemstone, rarely found in the Five Galaxies. I've never seen any reports of this. Cutting this kind of gemstone required high craftsmanship." Ye Chong

explained exactly as Mu worded it.

Meng Fei'er was growing bored, but immediately brightened at this, grabbing the green gem away from Ye Chong's hands. Women were naturally attracted to gems and the like, even though this particular one was still uncut, without the typical luster of gems.

Qin Zuo's eyes brightened as well. "Rarely found in the Five Galaxies? Are you telling me there are people beyond the Five Galaxies?" His questions gained the attention of everyone around him.

Chapter 214: Landing

The five of them were deeply affected by this new piece of information. Any resident of the Five Galaxies would be. This young man had just divulged something truly unexpected.

Ye Chong did not care to explain further to them, and continued talking about the minerals. These minerals were all precious items, but to Ye Chong, they were not useful, and so Ye Chong returned them all to the team.

Qin Zuo was feeling a little fazed, shocked by the news from Ye Chong. The lack of further elaboration from Ye Chong convinced him more of the truth of this news.

What if, beyond the Five Galaxies, a society was thriving, and this society dominated over them without ever being discovered ...

Ye Chong ignored their reactions. The Five Galaxies were nothing special to him. While the Orbits and Black Cove did not spread as far and wide as the Five Galaxies, their technological achievements and overall strength were superior to that of the Five Galaxies. Perhaps the MPA would have a similar base. Ye Chong thought is plausible.

Besides, based on his experience, it was not as though the higher ups of the Five Galaxies did not know of the Three Forces. Every time the any of the Three Forces had a major operation, Ye Chong could see that the various authorities of the Five Galaxies cooperated without much fuss.

The only person who was truly pondering this issue was Qin Zuo. Phal and Vicente were focused on digesting whatever information Ye Chong had provided on the minerals. Meng Fei'er, on the other hand, was watching Ye Chong with her large, mesmerizing eyes, listening to his words with an air of worship as he talked about the plant specimens. To Meng Fei'er, this cold young man was a highly educated academic, and while she was bored by the entire session

on minerals earlier, she believed that he was probably even more learned in botany than her own teachers.

Ye Chong's knowledge came from the chip that Lunatic Guan left for him. Alchemy aristocrats with their long histories had a store of knowledge that no academy could ever hope to achieve.

Han Ben in his straightforward nature would never stop to consider this issue. Once he was permitted to use the mech training room, he spent most of his time there. Vicente and Phal were permitted to use the metals laboratory, and they were overjoyed with the opportunity to use all the available top class apparatus. They immersed themselves completely in their work. As for Meng Fei'er, she mostly stayed in the alchemy laboratory. Ye Chong allowed them to use the labs to use how they would use them. While he was not watching in person, Mu had recording of what they did for Ye Chong.

Qin Zuo looked at the four of them helplessly. How could the four of them not feel threatened? Qin Zuo suspected that they may even have forgotten the whole point of this operation. Looking at the back of the young man's thin figure, Qin Zuo had the impression that he could successfully ambush him. However, he recalled the young man's calm gaze, and Qin Zuo could not suppress the shudder that followed and reconsidered his thoughts on ambushing.

Once, he saw the young man breaking a stuck metal alloy cylinder in half. Qin Zuo gulped heavily, thankful that he did not attack the young man. As expected, the young man had the power to suppress a few people himself, and Qin Zuo grew confident that the young man must have a background in combat. In the days that followed, Qin Zuo avoided looking at Ye Chong directly.

Coxcomb enjoyed a smooth journey ahead, with no space pirates in sight. The large starship could only be targeted by large pirate crews, not a suitable target for smaller crews. Mu's plotted trajectory was the shortest distance, so when Ye Chong announced

that they had reached Tappero Galaxy, everyone looked a little confused. They did not expect the journey to be so swift.

The Five Galaxies were all near to one another - Fal and Cyana formed a straight line that was perpendicular to the line formed by Tian Luo and Tappero, while Csebesini was in the middle of these four galaxies. The Five Galaxies were surrounded by the vast space of the universe, populated by numerous uncharted worlds.

As they left Tappero Galaxy, the space around them became emptier. There were no starship fleets, no space outposts, no space stations. It was rare for them to chance upon one or two small explorer starships along the way.

As the explorers ventured further out, more and more planets were ascertained, but with the exception of those with valuable resources, most planets were still mostly untouched. Vicente's student was most daring - the planet he discovered was very far away from the nearest inhabited planet at the edge of Tappero Galaxy.

Space was not always quiet and peaceful. On the contrary, it was full of unpredictable dangers. The further away one explored, the more difficult it was to resupply, and any hopes for assistance in the face of danger would be dismal. However, in this world, risk was accompanied proportionately by profit. Every year, many explorers ventured away from the Five Galaxies into the vast, unknown territory beyond. Of course, most of them never returned.

Without the star chart provided by Vicente's student, it would be most difficult to find the primary planet of interest. Mu's star chart extended only up to the edge of Tappero Galaxy. Even so, it took plenty of effort for the team to find the primary planet. Ye Chong was surprised that Vicente's student could find it in the first place. Perhaps it was attributable to his luck.

"Is it that one right ahead?" Ye Chong pointed at a large, green

planet displayed on the holographic screen. The planet was larger than he expected.

Vicente nodded as Phal agreed loudly, "That's the one. Hah, I didn't think we'd be back so soon!" Qin Zuo buried his face in his hands and sighed inside. Heavens, did these people not understand what they were getting into?

Due to atmospheric turbulence, the starship trembled slightly as they descended through the atmosphere. Ye Chong did not land immediately, but orbited the planet once beforehand. The team did not study the planet extensively last time either, and it was best to be cautious against any possible dangers.

The primary planet was mostly covered with forests unspoiled by any human activities, stretching endlessly to the horizon. Through scanning, they found the forest to be dense and full of life. Herds of wild animals could be seen between the trees as they swooped past. Unfortunately, interference was heavy in the area, and even Mu's holographic scanning accuracy suffered. Nevertheless, it was clear from Mu's scanning results that the place was full of natural resources. The value of timber from the trees alone was unimaginable.

Oceans covered about a fifth of the planet's surface, not as large as the forest coverage, but they glimmered with an odd light purple, unlike the natural blue found on most planets. Mountain ranges soared, their peaks covered with snow. The ocean shined in light purple, while the forest sprawled densely across the lands. The view was magnificently scenic. Like the trash planet, this place was uninhabited, but it was teeming with life, unlike the desolation on the trash planet.

After orbiting one round about the planet, Ye Chong determined the precaution to be mostly useless. Interference from the geomagnetic fields was strong, and scanning was useless. Even Mu's holographic scan could only extend to a much shortened range of about three kilometers. Ye Chong believed that other

models of holographic scanning would be useless here.

Ye Chong arrived at the landing spot used by Qin Zuo last time. His main goal was the teardrop mineralite, everything else was secondary, even though there were many other useful things around here. Ye Chong said nothing, unwilling to expose his true intentions to the team.

From high above in the air, one could see that the land was covered by dense forests, but the leaves were too thick to see through.

"You're sure it's here?" Ye Chong repeated his question. Ye Chong needed them to be exactly where they were last time. Unlike from outer space, Mu's scanning perimeter here was only three kilometers. If they could not find their last landing spot, finding the teardrop mineralite on this massive planet would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

The five of them nodded in unison as Qin Zuo said, "Yes, right here. You see those two rivers joining over here, making a fork, I'm sure it's here. Last time, we walked along the wider of the two rivers towards that direction." Qin Zuo pointed.

Seeing their unanimous agreement, Ye Chong decided to land there.

Zika class starships were not comparable to the small starship that Qin Zuo and his team used. The noise from their landing was staggering. The Zika class starship was five kilometers in length, and Coxcomb flattened all the trees that lay beneath it. Nearby, wild animals scattered in fear. The sight of those animals escaping in hordes was magnificent.

The five of them watched sadly. Those timber could be sold at a high price in the Five Galaxies, but they were now all destroyed. Many other plants were destroyed in their landing, and the one who was affected the most was Meng Fei'er.

Coxcomb landed on the forest, forcing a clearing out of the trees.

When the five of them disembarked from the Coxcomb, they felt refreshed by the moist air outside. Air produced by starships was still incomparable to natural, fresh air born out of the forests. No matter how much technology had advanced, some things were still irreplaceable with human effort.

The team left the starship cautiously. The forest terrain was complicated, holographic scanning was ineffective, and travelling with mechs was inadvisable. Hence, all of them could only wear their protective suits as they left the ship. Unfortunately, the starship was not equipped with weapons like heat ray guns, and this bothered all of them, aside from Ye Chong. While they did not meet any vicious wild animals the last time they were here, but it was still better to be prepared for the possibility. The five of them could only pray that their protective suits were solid enough to keep them safe. These protective suits came from Coxcomb; if it were up to Ye Chong, he would not have bought them.

Ye Chong noticed then that the scenery was completely different than what he saw from above.

Flowers bloomed in all colours, and the moist, warm climate nurtured the rich life on this planet. For a short moment, Ye Chong took in the view in a daze.

Light gold branches were traced with a network of gold colored lines, and crimson palm-shaped leaves also had gold colored veins on them. Many small, black-gray fruits hung from the trees. Ye Chong immediately recognized that those were golden tilia - he had seen them before in the chip given to him by Lunatic Guan. These plants were ornamental, their fruits edible, but these did not mean that the plants were suitable for planting indoors. Sap from the plants would turn poisonous upon contact with blood, and could kill a human within seven seconds. In the chip's records, there was once an ancient tribe that liked to cover their weapons with this horrible tree sap. However, the tribe was eventually

wiped out by the human race.

Ye Chong really wanted to pluck a few of those leaves for research, but he restrained himself. Now was not the time for this, he should focus on the teardrop mineralite instead. Based on Mu's feedback, there were no teardrop mineralite deposits within a three-kilometer range.

Not many inhabited planets could offer this wonderful sight. While Qin Zuo and his team had come here before, they were still deeply entranced by the area in their second visit.

"Alright, let's move." Ye Chong's plain but firm voice brought them back to reality.

"Do we follow our tracks from last time?" Qin Zuo asked.

"Yes."

The team marched ahead in a line along the river. Leading the team was Qin Zuo, while Han Ben guarded the rear. Since the protective suits had propulsion systems, they could fly slowly along the way. This allowed Phal and Vicente to keep up despite their age. Ye Chong wondered how far both of them could go without those suits.

The forest flourished. Humongous trees reached for the skies, covering the ground with their dense canopies. Only an occasional break in the leaves allowed for some stellar light to pass through.

Vines sprawled out in a frenzy between the ground and the large trees, a hindrance to their way forward. Fortunately, it was much cooler beside the river. Ye Chong examined the plants as he passed by them, surprise growing beneath his calm expression. The plant life here was extensive, and it was not 20 minutes into their journey that Ye Chong had already recognized 22 of the rare plant species recorded in Lunatic Guan's chip. Moreover, these plants seemed to be growing quite healthily.

This was undeniably heaven for all alchemists.

A plant with a massive flower in fiery red caught Meng Fei'er's attention. The flower was vivid red, and its petals were oddly shaped, like two human face contours stuck together back-to-back. The stem was thick. This was probably the first time Meng Fei'er had ever seen this kind of plant, and as she wondered at why she had never seen it before, as her body was moving closer and closer towards the plant.

Ye Chong looked back unintentionally, and saw what was happening. His eyes widened immediately!

Chapter 215: Twin Sisters

There was no time to warn her. Ye Chong whipped out the dagger from his thigh and flung it towards her. A silver glimmer flickered across the air.

In that moment, Meng Fei'er realized that the red wormlike creature in the fiery red flower was aiming towards her, moving so fast that she could only see a flash of red. "Ah!" Meng Fei'er gasped in shock, and saw the red worm coming closer and closer to her. She wanted to step back and avoid the attack, but could not react in time. Her heart sank as she realized that she was done for!

Her eyes widened in horror. When a shiny glimmer swept past her, she did not react still.

What broke her out of her trance was a thumping sound. Meng Fei'er looked towards the source, and found on her left a dagger embedded to its hilt on a tree. The force of the attack was enough to make the tree shake violently. Leaves scattered in the wind, creating a beautiful sight.

The group finally noticed something was wrong. Just beside Meng Fei'er's feet was a 15-centimeter long scarlet red vine, coated in a layer of sticky slime. The slime was corrosive, burning holes in the ground as they dripped from the vine. A thin green smoke curled upwards as the slime did its work, and the sharp corrosive smell made everyone else back off.

Lying silently in the scorched pit was a finger-thick scarlet object, with a thin smoke curling upwards from it. It was an eerie sight.

Meng Fei'er was already plunged into a daze, looking confused at everyone.

Ye Chong could not help but frowned - she was obviously in a state of shock. As the rest of them watched, Ye Chong moved towards Meng Fei'er. He moved so quickly that the rest of the team

were startled, and looked towards Ye Chong with respect.

Seeing Meng Fei'er not even wearing a mask, Ye Chong believed that she might even thought of this expedition as a sightseeing trip! If she was not his comrade for the moment, Ye Chong would have just ignored her.

There were many ways to treat shock, and Ye Chong chose the simplest way.

Slap! Slap! Ye Chong slapped her twice in the face. To Ye Chong, someone as weak as her should not have joined an expedition like this. Ye Chong did not pity her just because she was a woman - the enemy would never do so anyway.

The rest of the team stared in shock at Ye Chong, their mouths gaping wide open. They never thought anyone capable of hurting Meng Fei'er like that.

Meng Fei'er was a beauty by all respects. She was sympathetic, tactful and understanding. To many, she was the perfect image of a modern woman. In every annual appraisal of the Unity Academy, no other woman was her match. Meng Fei'er was undisputedly the most popular member of her sex.

Meng Fei'er had a special quality to her. Standing before her, anyone would feel self conscious, and no one had ever spoken roughly to her. With her, one could not help but be mellow. Even Qin Zuo with his excellent self control was affected by Meng Fei'er. On the other hand, Meng Fei'er had never been conceited because of this, but continued to be modest, gentle and understanding.

Now, someone had dared to slap her! How could anyone do that expressionlessly? The four of them had just seen something almost unimaginable. If word of this reached the Unity Academy's teachers and students, they would probably overcome this cold young man by sheer numbers. The four of them exchanged horrified glances.

Meng Fei'er's snow white cheeks were now imprinted with two red, symmetrical palm prints, almost like the fiery red flower with its back-to-back petals.

Ye Chong's method was, if anything, effective. Meng Fei'er was startled, but quickly felt the full wave of terror overcoming her. Meng Fei'er finally burst into tears, and threw herself into Ye Chong. Even though Meng Fei'er was usually calm and composed, she was still a woman, and her first reaction to this unprecedented terror was to look for protection.

Ye Chong could not help but frown again.

Seeing Meng Fei'er embracing Ye Chong was enough to make Qin Zuo feel envious. No normal man would reject the embrace of a beautiful woman, especially a flawless beauty like this one.

Ye Chong was not used to being physically close with anyone, and keeping people at a distance was second nature to him. However, he did not avoid the embrace, since Meng Fei'er would then fall to the ground, and their expedition would be further delayed. Too much time was already wasted.

Ye Chong noticed Qin Zuo looking towards him from the corner of his eye, and knew what to do.

His left hand pressed gently on Meng Fei'er's shoulder, while his right reached for her waist and pushed. Meng Fei'er was sent like a sandbag towards Qin Zuo.

Qin Zuo was watching everything, but did not anticipate what Ye Chong had just done. He reacted quickly enough, though, and opened up his arms to catch Meng Fei'er. The moment he caught her, he took a few steps back to absorb the momentum, afraid to hurt Meng Fei'er.

Qin Zuo did not expect fortune to smile upon him. He only caught Meng Fei'er out of reflex, and when the fact that Meng Fei'er was in his embrace was fully registered, he was thoroughly

overjoyed.

Ye Chong ignored them all as he quietly retrieved his dagger from the tree. Gu Shaoze's gift had helped him many times in the past. Ye Chong wiped the blade with great care.

Then, he moved towards the fiery red and apparently dangerous plant to inspect it.

The two faces were actually its petals, and it was hollow inside. Ye Chong moved closer, the other end of the vine that he severed with his dagger was now lying quietly within. The severed end was oozing a bright red slime, looking a little like blood.

Even though the plant was obviously not threatening now, Ye Chong still acted carefully. The strong corrosive nature of the sticky slime filled him with apprehension. It looked like the chip was right. However, the corrosive slime seemed to be ineffective against the petals. It was truly an impressively adapted organism. This plant's most terrifying part was the tip of its scarlet red vine. That was the core of its attack. Without it, the flower was harmless.

Ye Chong's left hand carefully held the two face-like petals, while his right hand wielded the dagger and cut the stem that supported the flower. The petals were now the perfect container for the scarlet red slime within. Ye Chong moved his shoulders, and his backpack slithered down unnaturally to his right hand.

Studying Lan Yixing's chip, Ye Cong could now control his muscles to an unusual extent. His way of retrieving his backpack just now was a good example, though it went by unnoticed. If Ye Chong was naked waist up, they would have noticed the way Ye Chong's muscles rippled from the shoulder down like waves, passing the backpack to Ye Chong's right arm.

Lan Yixing's chip did not teach this technique; it was a trick that Ye Chong came up with himself. This was also a way to train his muscles. Ye Chong could only do this with his shoulders and arms

for now, still quite away from controlling his entire body in this way.

Fortunately, everyone was looking at Meng Fei'er at the moment, and did not notice this tiny detail.

Ye Chong opened the backpack with his right hand and took out a rectangular metallic container. He opened the container, and cold air slowly wafted out from within. One could see rows of spheres lined through the cold air. Ye Chong took one of those fist-sized spheres from inside the container. It had a peculiar texture - the surface shined with a metallic luster, but through the semi-transparent shell, one could see inside the sphere. This one was empty. Since it was stored at a constant cold temperature, the sphere was cold to the touch.

Ye Chong pressed on a protrusion beneath the sphere, and the sphere buzzed as its upper half opened up, leaving a hemispherical bowl in his hand. Ye Chong carefully placed the fiery red petals inside. He pressed the protrusion again, and the sphere closed up into its initial spherical semi-transparent form. From the outside, one could see the flower within. Ye Chong kept the sphere with its new content back inside the container.

The container was a special specimen container used by alchemists. It kept its contents fresh by maintaining a cold temperature within, and once the container was sealed, the spheres within would become suspended in a zero-gravity vacuum. Such a cutting edge specimen container was like a dream toolkit for every alchemist.

"What was that?" Meng Fei'er spoke. Her voice was still tinged with fear. It took only a moment for Meng Fei'er to compose herself again after she landed into Qin Zuo's embrace. Qin Zuo could only regret that the moment passed by too soon. Meng Fei'er watched Ye Chong's every move, and she finally understood what had happened. The young man who was currently looking very focused was the one who saved her.

Ye Chong relaxed at last. He had to be very careful handling such a dangerous sticky slime. The petals were worthless for him, but he wanted the vine with its sticky slime. In Lunatic Guan's chip, there were quite a few concoctions that called for this ingredient. Since Twin Sisters was a rare plant, who knew when he would see one again?

Ye Chong put the specimen container back inside his backpack and turned to her. "This is Twin Sisters. Its known for its ability prey on other organisms. Inside the petals is a red vine, like a snake. This vine secretes an extremely corrosive slime. The slime also has paralytic properties. Please wear your mask, your carelessness will delay us. Also, please don't approach unfamiliar plants without thought. The forest is more dangerous than you think." Ye Chong lectured coldly.

He ignored Meng Fei'er after that.

They were very much delayed, and Ye Chong did not intend to waste any more time. Meng Fei'er knew that she had acted too recklessly. As the young man turned his back to her, Meng Fei'er quietly put on the mask from her protective suit.

The group advanced.

Ye Chong grew more and more anxious. He could not understand how this team had managed to venture so deep into the forest and return unscathed.

Many of the plants here were recorded in Lunatic Guan's chip. Looking at the easy expression on the four members of the team, aside from Meng Fei'er, Ye Chong marvelled on how the ignorant could afford to be fearless.

Less than half a meter from Phal was a dark brown vine, from the infamous Blood Sucking Vines. These vines were covered entirely with thorns. Any animal that was pricked would be injected with a very powerful anaesthetic. The poison from 25 thorns was enough to make an adult lion defenseless. Once a prey was anaesthetised, it

would be drained of all its blood until only a dry corpse remained.

Three meters above Ye Chong was an egg-shaped fruit, from the honey juniper tree. Honey juniper fruits were sweet and fragrant, and rich in nutrients. One could smell its scent from a long distance away. However, the fragrance was equally terrifying.

Honey juniper fruits were natural nests for the black-winged hornets. One would almost never see one without the other. Ye Chong noticed with his sharp eyes that a few black-winged hornets had just burrowed into one of the fruits. Black-winged hornets were horrible beings, and if you accidentally touched their nests, you would have sealed your deadly fate.

These insects were very aggressive, and even vengeful. A healthy member of the black-winged hornets would penetrate a centimeter-thick alloy board with the stinger on its tail. Besides, the stinger was packed with enough poison to kill a person very quickly. Ye Chong had no confidence of their protective suits against these insects.

There were too many dangerous plants around here! Moreover, Ye Chong did not recognize many of them, and did not know if they were harmful. Of course, he would not care to experiment now.

Fortunately, the incident with Meng Fei'er had made everyone more vigilant. The corrosive slime had left a deep impression in them.

If the walk along the river was this hard, trekking through the forest would be even more so.

The river water was clear, and the sound of flowing water helped create a peaceful atmosphere unique to the forests.

Up until now, they had not encountered anything like vicious wild animals. Ye Chong was disturbed by the fact. If even the plants were so dangerous here, Ye Chong would not believe that the animals here would fare any better.

Coxcomb's landing may have scared off plenty of the animals, but Ye Chong still understood the territorial nature of the more intelligent animals. On the trash planet, Ye Chong had fought against various mutants, and he had grown familiar with the ways of these animals, especially the fiercer ones.

Ye Chong would never underestimate the strength of wild animals. Take the iron lizard on the trash planet for example. Ye Chong believed that if all the mech pilots from the Five Galaxies tried to take on the iron lizard one-on-one, most of them would never survive. This dangerous forest, on the other hand, was home to hundreds and thousands of creatures undisturbed by mankind. Ye Chong could not begin to imagine what they would be like.

However, with a water source like this, it must be where animals nearby quench their thirst.

Why have they not encountered a single animal? This baffled Ye Chong. After all, they were quite a distance from the Coxcomb already.

Could it be ...

Ye Chong had an ill premonition. Behind him, the river flowed, and many silver lines flickered into existence.

Chapter 216: Creature

Most of the more vicious wild animals were territorial, and other animals would avoid entering their territories. Of course, usually only the scarier wild animals were like this. The iron lizard on the trash planet, for example, was the strongest animal on the planet, and no other animal would dare to trespass its home.

This was what Ye Chong was most worried about. No matter how he looked at it, the environment was suitable. Ye Chong had even passed by and seen creatures such as the black-winged hornet not too long ago. Here, however, he could see no signs of other animals, not even some animal feces. This was odd.

It also made him more alert, and even increasingly wary.

"Careful, from the back!" Mu's warning was always so timely.

Ye Chong leapt forward like an arrow released.

Bangbangbang!

He could hear a series of blasts, followed by a few horrified screams. Qin Zuo and the rest could not move as fast as Ye Chong. They were all more relaxed and did not expect an attack, since the last time they were here, things were peaceful.

Ye Chong saw that there were no threatening plants ahead, so he continued running forward as he looked back to see what it was.

On the river, tens of pipes, thick as a thumb, broke the water's surface. The pipes were directed towards them. Ye Chong was alarmed. What was that?

He swept a glance behind him. Qin Zuo and the rest were all on the ground, wailing. Many arrow-like things were stuck on their bodies, as thick as the pipes. The protective suits were useless against those weapons. The areas where the needles went in them were now bloody, and the five of them were obviously in pain.

Ye Chong was shocked. Anything that could penetrate these protective suits was no joke. What was that?

Suddenly, the river splashed into waves. Ye Chong watched an unfamiliar creature emerge from the waters.

The creature looked very odd. A flat disc supported the animal as it floated on the waters, and from the edges of the disc, numerous silver tentacles extended outwards. These tentacles were hollow, and looked like straws when they straightened. These were the pipes that Ye Chong saw earlier above the river surface. The disc itself was covered with thorns. From afar, it looked like a circular archery target completely covered with arrows. At the center of the disc was a thick, meaty cylinder that went upwards and ended in a black globular sac. On the sac, a pair of scarlet red eyes seemed to cry for blood, and they were looking straight at Ye Chong.

What was that? Ye Chong was baffled. He was sure that he had never seen anything like it. He took a quick glance at the five on the ground again. They did not look good. In truth, when encountering an unfamiliar animal like this, the best course of action would be to escape. Now, however, Ye Chong had to face it head on. If he did not rescue them, the chances of him finding the teardrop mineralite on this vast planet would be worse than him killing this creature.

Ye Chong deployed Guardian without a moment's hesitation.

A few rays of light broke through the leaves and shone on Guardian, and the dazzling gold reminded one of the mythical warriors that once fought for the Gods. It was a pity that Ye Chong could not see it himself, but he probably would have complained that the gold was too eye-catching. Ye Chong was not adjusting himself. It had been awhile since he used Guardian for battle, and he needed time to get used to the black and white vision.

The sudden transformation in Ye Chong's exterior apparently surprised the creature.

Suddenly, the globular sac expanded like an inflating balloon. At the same time, the disc expanded quickly as well, and those thorns mysteriously disappeared into the creature's body. All the tentacles aimed at Ye Chong.

Swish swish swish!

The sound was most familiar to Ye Chong - it was the sound of objects travelling very fast through the air. His vision immediately filled up with dozens of white spots, and the information window at the side of his vision refreshed quickly, responding to the attack.

Ye Chong whipped out his dagger, fast as lightning. Ye Chong could do this inhumanly fast in person; with Guardian, his speed was beyond what the human eye could perceive.

Guardian did not retreat, but charged forward like a golden streak of lightning towards the creature. Z-steps, curved steps ... Ye Chong used everything he had, treating the creature as a most formidable enemy.

As he avoided some of the needles, Ye Chong used his dagger to block the ones that he could not avoid. The flying needles were packed with power, and came at a very dangerous speed. Even with Guardian, Ye Chong dared not let down his guard.

That thing could attack continuously! Ye Chong focused hard in the fight.

The creature's tentacles spit out the needles, again and again. The silver needles looked like waves of silver rays under the sunlight, flying towards Ye Chong.

Guardian was successfully approaching the creature. In his vision, Ye Chong could see Guardian beginning to analyze the creature. A fatal white line marked the spot between its eyes! Ye Chong understood that the white line indicated the weakest spot of the creature.

There was no time to think any further. Ye Chong focused on the

white line.

Behind Ye Chong, the trees and the ground were full of silver needles, glimmering like exquisite artefacts under the sun. These needles were all aimed at Ye Chong, so the wounded five were not attacked instead.

The creature was finally out of needles! Ye Chong felt calm as usual. The white line between the creature's scarlet red eyes was growing larger and larger in sight.

The creature was finally showing some fear in its eyes. It had always reigned supreme in this forest, and now it was facing something even stronger than itself.

Guardian's Mach 10 sprint was unleashed in all its glory. When something came at you with the speed of Mach 10, the impact was devastating.

The creature thought to escape and quickly began to submerge. It believed that it would have the advantage underwater.

Before it could submerge its round disc beneath the waters, all of a sudden, it felt a chill between its eyes.

Ye Chong saw that it was trying to escape, and flung out his dagger in his right hand. The throw was flawless, both in accuracy and strength.

Ye Chong stopped by the riverside, watching the creature's corpse floating on the water. He dragged the corpse to shore, and retrieved his dagger. Ye Chong withdrew Guardian and did not waste time studying the creature as he rushed back towards the rest of the team.

He quickly checked their injuries, and found them to be non-fatal. Meng Fei'er was the medic, and the one with the medical supplies. Ye Chong took the medical kit off her. Meng Fei'er had never experienced such terrible injuries in her life, and had already blacked out from the pain.

Ye Chong removed the needles from them all, and treated their wounds. Phal and Vicente were too old, and they too had fainted. Hen Ben and Qin Zuo were both athletic - while they were both pale, they remained conscious.

Their expressions betrayed shock and horror. The creature was the most fearsome they had ever seen. Its needles could go through the protective suits, which could withstand an attack from normal heat ray guns. That ugly creature was too horrifying! If not for the young man with them, they would probably have ended up as sustenance for the creature.

Qin Zuo's fear, however, was not reserved only for the creature. To him, the creature was horrifying, but compared to this seemingly weak young man before him, it was only an annoyance.

That golden armor that suddenly appeared was mostly likely a miniature mech model. As a teacher of the Unity Academy, if he could even recognize that, he should probably shoot himself. Of course, that was his first impression upon seeing Guardian.

In the next moment, he almost overturned his previous thought. "Heavens! Was that really a miniature mech?" Qin Zuo was stupefied. He could barely register the pain from his wounds. "What speed! Definitely above Mach 7!" He thought to himself as he made a conservative estimation.

How could there be a miniature mech that could go up to Mach 7? The fact could turn his world upside down.

As he saw the way the miniature mech avoided all those needles, switching directions at will, Qin Zuo could feel his mind coming to a halt.

"Was that even human?"

Qin Zuo was speechless. He realized now that the young man before him had exceeded all the standards of a normal human being.

Switching directions so quickly would produce a burden so heavy on the human body that survival was almost impossible. Qin Zuo was certain of it, as he saw what had happened. Even for the legendary character, YC that rose to fame so quickly in the virtual world, this was an entirely different level. Long ago, he had once watched a recording of YC's battle, making eight consecutive acute angle movements in three seconds. Before he met this young man before him, he had thought that that was the limit of the human body.

He never would have guessed that this young man was actually YC himself. To him, they were at two very different levels.

Ye Chong ignored the way Qin Zuo and Hen Ben were looking at him, as they thought he was a creature himself. He picked up a needle and inspected it closely. From its texture, it seemed to be a skeleton. That was Ye Chong's conclusion, thanks to his rich knowledge in skeletons. The needle was light, but strong, with a very sharp tip. It was silver and about 15 centimeters long. The tail end was flattened for easy flight. This was a natural skeleton arrow. Ye Chong began to collect all the skeleton arrows on the ground.

Ye Chong bundled up the 200 odd skeleton arrows together with a strong vein, and kept it in his backpack. He walked back to the creature's corpse and looked it over. It seemed that the creature had no more bones other than its skeleton arrows. It was no longer useful to Ye Chong.

Walking back to the rest of the team, Ye Chong found himself in a difficult situation. Of the five, three were unconscious, and the remaining two were heavily injured and could not walk. Without a guide, Ye Chong would never be able to find the teardrop mineralite.

Qin Zuo was sharp, and seemed to realize what Ye Chong was troubling about. He smiled wryly and said, "While I don't know what you are looking for, you should know that the last time we

were here, we basically just walked along the river and kept going. We didn't go very far, at most five kilometers from where we are now. You can find the way yourself." Qin Zuo knew that, with the young man's abilities and their current situation, the young man could finish them all off quickly and easily. There was no one to stop him.

Qin Zuo knew people. The stronger ones usually had a touch of arrogance in them, and would not easily accept favors from others. Hence, he offered it instead, hoping to at least get on the young man's good side, and increase their chances of survival.

Qin Zuo's cooperation obviously came as a surprise to Ye Chong. He looked at the five of them, and knew that they would be defenseless without him. As long as they stayed where they were, the risk was not too great. Considering the strength and aggressiveness of that creature, Ye Chong believed that there would be no other animals in the area. Mu's scanning results confirmed Ye Chong's suspicion.

Ye Chong nodded and said, "You all stay here. There are no wild animals around. I'll be back."

With that, Ye Chong turned his back and began to run along the river. Without the rest of the team slowing him down, Ye Chong ran fast, like an energetic leopard running through the forest.

Along the way, Ye Chong did not encounter any other wild animals, but saw a few dangerous plants. It looked like the creature back there held great power in this area.

Five kilometers was a piece of cake for Ye Chong.

"Stop! Ye." Mu suddenly spoke up. Even with his calm composure, Ye Chong could not help but feel overjoyed. If Mu had asked him to stop for no apparent reason, he must have found something.

As expected, Mu said, "Ye, to the left."

Ye Chong followed Mu's instructions as he moved. Foliage was thick here, and a big hindrance to Ye Chong. Seeing the numerous intertwining vines that stretched above him, Ye Chong gave up on the idea of flying.

Ye Chong deployed Guardian instead, thinking that no plant should be able to break through Guardian's armor. With that, he advanced faster ahead. However, using an advanced mech like Guardian just to open a path was probably something only Ye Chong would do.

"Alright, it's here." Despite Mu's usual calmness, his voice betrayed a trace of nervousness. This made Ye Chong realize once again the importance of this teardrop mineralite.

There was a clearing. Strangely, no plants were growing within a 50-meter radius. This was a perfectly circular area of bare earth, and in the center of this clearing was a dark hole.

The perfectly circular clearing, with nothing growing in it amidst the dense forest, was eerie and unsettling.

Chapter 217: The Cave Underground

The forest was vast and dense, yet there was this particular area, barren, without any sprout of plant in sight, forming a perfect circle, giving off a peculiar feeling.

Ye Chong got out of the Guardian. It was a relief to his eyes when he returned to the normal, colorful vision after remaining in the monochrome sight for quite some time. The Guardian was amazing indeed, but he had identified one blatant weakness in it, which was exceptionally prominent in areas with complicated landscape like this forest. The Guardian had a full run on its visual analysis when Ye Chong came to this forest. The lines and dots were increased by a gazillion times as they stranded over each other, becoming nearly indistinguishable visual in Ye Chong's eyes. That was why he got out of the Guardian instead.

According to Mu's detection, there was no threat within their proximity.

The abyssal opening looked real deep, or even bottomless Ye Chong wondered, as he tossed one pebble into the nothingness. He then heard the sound of pebble bouncing a few times, "Mhm... the opening was not a straight one... apparently..."

Ye Chong, from the bag on his waist, withdrew a dimensional keystone which took a lifelike appearance of an insect. This was one of the mechs Ye Chong bought in a batch during his visit at Nine Gates City, an engineering model, mainly for the purpose of excavation and ore-extraction, which seemed to be a suitable arsenal to travel through the cave.

The mech carried the name, "Multipede", which took the form of a mutated insect obviously, with dark-brown segmented body, allowing agile movements deep in the cave, especially with the miniature engines installed at every segment in addition to the pseudo-antenna mechanical legs of passive-activation

Deployed the mech, he hopped into the cabin, took a firm seat and he launched the mech.

Multipede crawled into the opening within a few hushes nimbly. The mechanical legs were on passive-activation, which turned out to be an ease to Ye Chong's piloting. The terrain within the cave was unexpectedly in various winding shapes, with limited lighting that the night vision on Multipede was proven to be ineffective. Fortunately Multipede was pre-installed with a set of bursting plasma lighting. The ride was not as bumpy as Ye Chong thought. It was a smooth sail for him, which he complimented the designer of this mech a little.

Multipede travelled quite quickly. The tunnel was becoming more winding than he presumed. Mu had detected the location of the teardrop mineralite, which was about 3 kilometers away from their current location, although Ye Chong already felt that they had travelled more than 3 kilometers.

Tick!

Phew... finally. They made it to the end, his sight brightened as they arrived at a large flat ground at the bottommost of the cave, with the sound of water dripping through his ears.

Multipede was parked on the ground carefully. Ye Chong then flipped out of the cabin.

Gasp... Ye Chong inhaled intensely upon seeing the sight before him.

The deep cave was dark at first and now it was glowing in all kinds of lights into Ye Chong's eyes.

A stream across the ground, sinking right at the ankle of Ye Chong, flowing to the other side with discernible hushes in the deserted underground. And that was when Ye Chong realized, the stream was not wholly a stream after all, the glow came from the stream, where the ores were shining in dazzles brighter than the

stars in the sky, lighting up the darkness of the menacing cave.

Ye Chong had seen quite a variety of ores before, but never ever he had seen ores which could produce such glow alone and now he was standing in a stream of them, with all types of colors he could imagined, in all kinds of shapes which were staggering for him to name.

"Transmuted Energy Ore!" Mu's voice was too filled with fascination.

"Transmuted energy ore? Mu, what's that? Is it anything useful?" asked Ye Chong in bewilderment.

"Yes! Useful! Of course it is useful!" Mu's tone was firm, "Mhm, and the teardrop mineralite has to be somewhere nearby, which explains the energy transmutation occurred in these ores... So..." Mu sounded as if he was talking to himself.

Ye Chong was confused. Energy transmutation? What is that?

"Ye." And apparently Mu was not in the favor of giving an explanation, rushed he, "Quickly gather these transmuted ores. All of them. They are very useful."

"All... of them...?" Gulped Ye Chong, as his eyes set upon this milky way of glowing ores.

He reached his hands to the ore, "Ye." Said Mu again, "Get the teardrop instead, it should be just around here, no more than 300 meters away from here, while I do the collection of these ores."

"Okay," responded Ye Chong as he began searching the Teardrop within this flock of transmuted energy ores. Mu on the other hand began piloting Multipede to perform the extraction. Well, Multipede was born for tasks of such kind, so the efficiency was satisfactory. The ores extracted were kept inside the storage of Multipede. There were 13 segments on its body, where only the first segment was used as a cabin and the remaining 12 segments were used as the storage for ores collected.

Ye Chong followed the winding streams, yet he did not find a single sight of the Teardrop throughout his way.

At the very end of the cave, Ye Chong discovered a few teardrop mineralites scattered on the ground in a gentle glow.

Phew... at least it was not a wild goose chase after all.

Ye Chong was going to advance forward, but the sudden rush of goosebumps stormed upon his body. A strong sense of danger roared in his instinct, "Ye. Stay still." Mu's words echoed almost immediately after. His words were fearful, which was the first time Ye Chong perceived, from such a fearful Mu.

What was the danger that caused such fear even in this artificial intelligence? The thought flashed in his mind.

He took a careful look around. Nothing strange in particular, even though that strong sense of danger lingered in his mind.

"What exactly is wrong?" Inquired Ye Chong, "Mu, I just feel something wrong..."

"Ye, deploy me now." Hurried Mu, "Take a look beyond the Teardrops."

Beyond...? Ye Chong had only been looking at the Teardrops, he had hardly looked beyond th... He lifted his head, the darkness stared back at him. Ye Chong flinched, as he pinpointed the source of his sense instantly. His sight was great, despite in the faint glow of the Teardrops, as he could discern the silhouettes of objects around. But there was one spot, 5 meters beyond the Teardrops, which formed an absolute darkness, where the lights were engulfed and failed to shine upon. Since the cave was already dark by nature, one would easily overlook that one darker area.

It was a blatant twist in the plot, where Mu even demanded to deploy himself right away. It was the first time Ye Chong faced such a grave danger after they left Trash Planet.

"What, is this?" Ye Chong's gaze intensified, as he asked Mu.

"Currently unidentifiable. Calculating..." Replied Mu, as his mechanical eyes flickered drastically, apparently running a rapid calculation in the background.

Ye Chong pondered slightly, he began sprinting! He sprinted over the stream, through the tunnel and jumped into Multipede, which had completed its extraction and was resting at the other end. The stream had been dried out, as the ores were cleared out, "Then..." He remembered the bursting plasma lighting installed at the head of Multipede, a few taps on the control panel he shifted the lighting to the darkness.

...

... ..

!

!!!

"What... is this...?" Exclamation escaped from Ye Chong's mouth widely opened.

The brightness of the plasma lighting shone throughout the area in the cave. The ground was white, the walls were white, the tunnel was wide, except that one corner, beyond the Teardrops, a dark circle about 3 meters in diameter hovered over the distance 5 meters away from the Teardrops. The bright light was fully engulfed by this circle.

The circle was as if a masterpiece illustrated by the best architecture tools, in a darkness which gave fright to anybody.

It was strange, really strange, that even a fearless boy like Ye Chong began to quiver.

What, exactly, is this?

The Teardrops were only a stone's thrown away from him, yet Ye Chong was too feared to even lift a step. The peculiarity was incomprehensible...

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 71%." Mu's voice rang cold.

...

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 75%." Mu's voice was shaking.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 78%." Mu's voice sounded agitated, "Ye, quick! Pick up the Teardrops!" Alarmingly he shouted, "But do not be within 10 meters of the Space Distorting Disc's proximity!"

Space Distorting Disc? Is it the dark circle?

But providing that I do not approach the Teardrops, how would I collect them? He looked at the Teardrops, which had a size, at the maximum, of a thumb... the mechanical legs of Multipede could never pick them up.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 82%." Mu's voice grew louder.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 87%." Mu screamed, "Ye! Fast! Now!"

Ye Chong understood he did not have the time to waste. As soon as Mu hurried, he got an idea, he jumped off the cabin and picked one rock of size of his fist.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 90%." Mu seemed calmer now...

Once he picked the rock, a force exerted at tip of his toes, flipped in a large curve he reached the side of the Distorting Disc, which looked like a fine lining in his eyes by then, as if the width was non-existent.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 93%." The strange form of Mu's countdown haunted Ye Chong.

A shake on his arm, the rock was flung towards the Teardrops. In another large curve, he shifted to the other side of the disc, no time for him to see if his plan worked.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 95%."

Thump! The rock he flung accurately landed at the densest point of the Teardrops, where they had flown up high as conservation of

momentum occurred, all the way towards Ye Chong.

The Teardrops travelled in different heights, forming an irregular shape of a fan. Ye Chong breathed in deeply, as he became countless afterimages, grabbing the Teardrops flawlessly. It was not that challenging to grab falling things with his sight and hand speed.

"Spatial Distortion Rate: 99%."

Mu's voice rang calmly. Ye Chong made a flip and got back to Mu.

Phew... He regained his stance. As long as he stood by Mu, he would be in good hands, although the disc was bizarre, his confidence towards Mu had grown deep inside himself. Mu was unbeatable, the ideology stood like a flag in Ye Chong's subconsciousness.

He then put the Teardrops into his bag. He took a look at that disc.

Wait... Ye Chong realized he missed one little Teardrop which was lying right before the disc. His strike did not work fully just now it seemed. But he did not mind, since he was considered rather lucky for he was able to retrieve stones of irregular shapes this many within such a brief timeframe.

"Spatial Distortion Rate...

...

100%."

Mu's voice came like the vaporization of dry ice.

Ye Chong glared upon the disc. Even though he did not understand the phrase "Spatial Distortion Rate", he at least understood what 100% could mean - it meant a completion, which would be proceeded by a change, a metamorphosis.

What kind of change, that's the question. Speculated Ye Chong in

his mind.

5 seconds lapsed. The disc remained hovered in the air. Nothing happened.

10 seconds lapsed. Nothing.

Mu wh—

Right when Ye Chong lifted his lips and was going to ask, that disc which seemed to be at its eternity had an unexpected development.

It was... a hand.

A strange hand of an unknown creature crawled out of the darkness. The dark skin was coated with dense linings in crimson, like checkers all over the hand. Ye Chong had never seen such skin before, which its glow was of metals and was glaring under the plasma lighting. The hand had 8 fingers, with noticeable hardness on its bones. The tip of the fingers... was made out of metal, if Ye Chong was right, as it glowed coldly. The fingers were connected with a layer of flesh, a strangeness Ye Chong could hardly word into.

Ye Chong did not see the elbow of the hand. The hand was reaching out to its everywhere, literally everywhere, once it got out of the disc, as if it had no bone, hitting any direction of any angle.

And that hand stopped abruptly. Ye Chong took a careful look. Wait... what... isn't that the Teardrop I missed in its hand?

The hand, as soon as it seized the Teardrop, retreated back into the disc.

Ye Chong was stoned upon the sight. Hell knows what that thing was. Mu did not speak either. The man and his mech just looked at this phenomena occurring.

After the hand completely sank into the disc, "Mu, what is this?"

Asked Ye Chong, gulping.

"Unidentifiable," stated Mu, with also a confused tone, "No match was found in my databank."

"What that dark disc is then?"

Shook the artificial intelligence, "Negative. Only distortion of space was detected."

What do you mean by...

"Mu what d-"

Ye Chong was going to ask, but something happened!

Chapter 218: Hypersonic

A shrill in the cave!

Ye Chong could feel his head pounding. Boom! A force came after, breaking his shaking stance. Thup! He was lifted by the violent wind and slammed upon the rocky wall behind. He could hear his backbones cracking and his insides were rumbling. Splash! He spat a pool of blood as he landed on the ground.

That slam had woken Ye Chong, as he discovered the waves coming from the dark disc. He looked at Mu, whose legs were dragged behind, forming a trail. The artificial intelligence had its eyes frantically flickering which meant he was clearly fighting against this force.

Ye Chong stumbled upon the sight, where Mu was at the edge of defeat, the first time it was. And the foe was merely using sound to fight...

The strong sonic waves wrecked the surrounding atmosphere. The fright and its overwhelming strength put upon Ye Chong was no longer imaginable.

The sound did not seem to be stopping anytime soon, as its pitch grew higher, the pressure intensified within Ye Chong's body, a stream of blood dripped off the corner of his lips. The droplet of blood did not survive the waves as well, as it shattered into vapors, flying away.

A shockwave of high frequency could be fatal to human anatomy, even for sturdy ones like Ye Chong's, as discomfort drained his face pale.

Ye Chong knew it well that he could be dead right there if he did not take any action. It was the biggest danger he had ever faced. His muscles were forced to vibrate along, as the atmosphere was shaking drastically. The fatigue stung his body, dizziness clouded

his head.

He took a deep breath and tried to regain his calmness. As he understood, the way to deal with death was to grab the lining of life within it.

He tried his best to disregard these influences. Ye Chong's cold gazes set upon the ripping dark disc. He readjusted his respiration with his chest pulled forcefully like an accordion and slowly it regained the inner peace.

His mind flowed through the cold water, as Ye Chong felt withdrawn from his physical body slightly. It felt like his usual meditation, other than the fact that he was doing it consciously as the pain still lingered in his body. He felt like an audience to his own agony, standing at the edge of his body.

He looked at the dark disc, his arms somehow mustered a bit of strength. His right hand drew the dagger out and with all that bit of strength he mustered, he tossed it right into the dark disc.

He had no idea what the dark disc was. He had no idea what the owner of that frightening arm was. But he knew he had to attack and that was the only way he could think of.

The dagger zoomed into the dark disc.

Ye Chong could feel his senses returning almost simultaneously after, when a wave of pain surged in him. Oww... He could no longer hold his whimper.

The deadly shrill ceased...

Ye Chong was already half-fainted. Mu, at his quickest speed, grabbed Ye Chong up right after the shrill stopped. He opened up his cabin and placed Ye Chong gently inside. He then turned away to the tunnel and began running, with Multipede following like a pet behind.

Mu would not let go of the ores even under such devastated circumstance. Poor Multipede, being the engineering model, had

barely any appropriate armor on its body. That demolishing shockwave dealt great damage on it. Sluggishly it dragged its shattered body. Fortunately, the processor remained intact, so Mu could remotely control its movement.

The winding tunnel to the outside was troublesome for Mu to travel but that was not the time for him to calculate. He would most likely bombard the underground to create a pathway directly to the surface, if he had the right weapon for it.

Ye Chong remained unconscious. If he had woken up at any point he would probably be ranting about how long the tunnel was.

Mu still travelled faster than Multipede as it only caught up 2 seconds after Mu hit the opening.

Mu used his only hand to grab Multipede and blasted off into the sky.

An infuriated shrill roared violently from the underground.

The ground was shattering the second after Mu flew off. The opening collapsed under the hypersonic of the unknown. Half a meter of the barren circular ground crumbled, forming a large rift.

Mu did not look down, he flew on, as long as he reached the sky, he would get back to Coxcomb.

Halfway through their journey, Ye Chong regained his consciousness. Thanks to his well-built body, he got back to his usual condition. That shock caused only an emergency shutdown to his system as a form of defense.

"M-Mu..." His words rang softly, "What was that..."

"Unidentifiable. Object: Unknown according to database," Mu replied.

"It is horrible..." Even an in-human like Ye Chong was exclaiming at the frightening event before. And that was also his first time seeing Mu behaving so gracelessly, he did not even have the energy

to fight back. What kind of living thing could produce such scream...?

Soundwave-based weaponry was not something foreign to Ye Chong. Well, its development was rather primitive in the 5 major galaxies. It was a kind of area-of-effect attack, which disregarded friends or foes. In other words, if you wanted a stronger sound wave attack, you would have to be much stronger to withstand it. Also its effective areas were of limited choices, as it required a medium like the air in the atmosphere to travel. But most of humanity spent their lives in the airless space now, which justified the underdevelopment of soundwave-based weaponry.

Despite all that, Ye Chong experienced the potency of soundwaves, and there was this particular living thing that was capable of producing them. How horrible... The three forces, be it the MPA, the Sanctuary or even the Black Coves, might be nothing compared to its power. Obviously one could say the attacker was no way a human.

And, under such existence, there were humans who always assumed themselves to be the ruler of the galaxy. What was the truth, the very truth of the rulership in the end, anyway?

The sight before Ye Chong widened, Mu had left the forest completely and reached the sky. Ye Chong sat steadily inside Mu. A sense of nostalgia struck, as he remembered the days back on Trash Planet when he had to log into the Virtual World almost everyday inside Mu. Well, that was no longer the case ever since they left Trash Planet. He hardly had the chance to board Mu. It felt warm... the memories, as the stiffened expression of Ye Chong melted.

!

"Mu!" Ye Chong yelled as he saw something approaching, "Look out! The mech behind!"

Mu's detection was based on hologramic scanning and on this

planet, Mu's detection only was capable of proximity about 3 kilometers, and 3 kilometers to a mech were hardly a distance, not even the distance of safety. So Ye Chong's naked eyes could do better than the mechanical eyes under such condition, especially when they were in the sky, away from the blockage of the woods.

A few mechs were flying towards them, in spread.

Ye Chong modified the setting as he switched Mu's camera to photographic mode, to have a better look at the mechs. They were of the same models, which Ye Chong could not recognize. A total 5 of them. Ye Chong directly related them to the case of the student of Vicente. The flock underneath could possibly be the organization who abducted that student.

The 5 mechs were pretty strange to him. He looked at the screen and made a few estimations. The height of the mechs were about 15 meters, which were much taller than most mechs; their body size were much larger than most mechs as well - a little bulky in design.

Those were not strange enough to Ye Chong, as he realized the mechs of such model were somehow a conglomeration, with the energy shooter in the hand, of a large musket, which made those energy shooters from MPA look like a toy pistol of a kid, at most an art piece rather than a real killing weapon. From the weapon they were holding, it obviously labeled them as a ranged model, and their shooting chamber further supported Ye Chong's assumption.

But, the catch was, there was an ancient lance made out of alloy at their back, along with a pair of laser swords installed on their body. They were not activated yet but Ye Chong could see the handle flashing at their sides. They were even armed with parrying spears, and a shield on the left arm, which its size was above average as well.

Ye Chong's eyes widened. What is this? Did a rack turn alive from someone's armory?

Judging from the enemies he had encountered before, be it the

Black Covers or those from the MPA, they all had very distinctive characteristics, either identifying them as the close-attackers or ranged attackers. This was applicable even for the Sanctuary, the one who struck the balance between yet they picked the other path as they collaborated a unique skill of theirs into the combats.

Closed-ranged and ranged attacking were two different concepts, that a single pilot could hardly wield both. This was exceptionally true as a pilot further honed his or her skills, usually they would prefer to have one of the paths fully improvised, since the saying of "when you are good at everything, you are good at nothing."

Frankly speaking, despite Ye Chong's comment of labelling them as the walking rack from someone's armory, they did not look that bad. It felt like an ancient coat of arms. With that ancient lance on the back, it looked pretty chivalrous. The edge of the shield was coated with sky blue, capsuling the golden brand in the center, giving off the vibes of the nobility.

There were shrills from the ground. Ye Chong could hear it clearly even above the sky. But the shrill had transformed into a mere sound traveling through air, since the shockwave had been fully absorbed by the ground.

"The mechs were probably attracted by the sound waves," speculated Ye Chong.

Mu was obviously not in the mood of having any duel with the mechs. His goal had been achieved while there was this unidentifiable monster rampaging underground. The sanest choice would be to get back to their warship.

Ye Chong was confident of Mu's velocity as he still travelled faster than most of the mechs even with Multipede in his grip.

At first he thought Mu would lose the 5 mechs in a matter of seconds. However so far, the only change was the distance between him and the 5 mechs. Yes, Mu was gaining distance from the 5 mechs, nevertheless it should not be the case since Mu had such an

insane speed.

Ye Chong had the thought and was shocked, as the speed of the 5 mechs could compete with the unmodified war machines of the three forces... with such bulky body, yet they had such velocity which Mu could not zap away from right away. It was shocking indeed. They were also flying in perfect position, their rapports were trained.

So which of the three forces were the mechs from?

This was the biggest mystery to Ye Chong currently.

Mu's speed also seemed to surprise the 5 mechs, as Ye Chong could occasionally see tiny flinches from them.

"Mu, be careful. They are shooting," warned Ye Chong as he saw two of the mechs charging energy at their muskets. Compared to Javelin Wing of the MPA, the charging action was too blatant in the eyes. He recalled the time he fought Javelin Wing, which the energy shooter did not even seem to be charging before it fired an explosion. That would be the ideal way of fighting, Ye Chong supposed.

"Understood," Mu replied flatly.

Ye Chong felt his head falling. He understood that it was Mu, doing the standard dodging procedure by disrupting the foes' shooting in unpredictable rhythm. This was Ye Chong's first time sitting right inside Mu experiencing the shaking of standard dodge.

Mu was still Mu, the skillful artificial intelligence, as his debut was a series of super duper advanced rapid disorderly turnings, which gave the sturdy man Ye Chong a lingering dizziness in his head. Ye Chong could not imagine doing the same turnings by himself.

Mu's moves were effective, as they confused the foes successfully. The light beams traveled right by Mu's side. Boom! The forest was seared into two baldy zones. "Man!" exclaimed Ye Chong in his

mind. The energy shooter was not the random shooter from the market!

The firings from the foes came off as a warning. Well they intended give a warning, till Mu's dramatic spin made them missed their shoot, reminding them that they had messed with the wrong guy.

One of the mechs fired a signal into the sky right after that. The bombardment occurred as a flash of red signal covering the sky. It might be a primitive methodology, but anyone would have used such a primitive technology, since the magnetic interferences were so strong that any communicative device would fail.

Mu's orbit was still confusing as hell. But Ye Chong could see their destination being not too far away - the Coxcombs, resting at the corner silently.

Chapter 219: The Foxes and the Hare

The gigantic Coxcomb was more eye-catching than anything else when Mu flew towards it without hesitation. Hm? Ye Chong took a light breath, as through the photon camera of Mu he saw Tai Zuo and his gang sitting by the opened gate.

Tai Zuo was the first who discerned the incoming "intruder", as he hurried the other folks to get up and hide under the shadow of Coxcomb. Wow, that's actually pretty smart. Complimented Ye Chong in his mind.

What actually happened was, everyone regained consciousness after Ye Chong left the ship, especially after being given expert care from Meng Fei'er, where their condition had improved a lot. Tai Zuo's reaction towards the incoming object was justified, the fact that he had taken the personality of the distant young man into consideration and had identified that if any incident were to happen, they would be the last few persons on ship to be directly involved. Thus, he ran away with the remaining members to the shadow. At least there were engines installed on their protective suits. It felt miraculous when they actually made it back to the Coxcomb despite their laid-back hovering. But the gate was already closed by then. So they only managed to sneak into the shadow of Coxcomb and wait for Ye Chong's return.

"Ah!" And Mu opened the gate right before he arrived by Coxcomb, which left the 5 men in dismay upon seeing this never-before-seen mech flying towards them. "What are you waiting for?" shouted Ye Chong, hustling the gang in their daydreams.

They might have never seen that mech before, but they heard Ye Chong's voice, and started space-swimming towards the opened Coxcomb.

The hunting mechs behind Mu ceased their acceleration upon seeing the Coxcomb. Anyone of them could imagine the size of an

army inside a spaceship of such hugeness. They might have strong rapports with each other and also armed with something, but they would not dare to infuriate the hundreds, no, the thousands inside the ship.

"Well, Mu," stated Ye Chong, "It looks like there is a need to equip you with some weaponry, or you would be too passive in the situation."

"Agreed," said Mu, "Our achievement this time is great. The loots are sufficient to produce a few weapons."

"What kind of weapons would you like, Mu?" Ye Chong asked with full of interest, since Mu was never armed with a gun or a blade from the very beginning he picked the machine from the trash, and Mu had always been fighting with weapons "borrowed" from the opponents, which were discarded right after the duel ended. Ye Chong did recognize that bit of pride in Mu, where probably he disdained those substandard weapons so much that he would never keep them as his toys for long-term.

"Regarding that... Ye, you would know when time arrives." And the artificial intelligence returned with a brief statement imbued with slight mystery, which further intrigued the young man inside the cabin.

The 5 mechs remained afar. Apparently they had never made a wild guess that the ship could also be literally empty. They fired a yellow signal next.

Mu soared in after seeing the running men having made back inside Coxcomb. The gate was closed right after.

Ye Chong gave a sigh of relief after Mu had landed safely. Their safety would be at better guarantee as long as they were inside Coxcomb.

"Oh how glad am I to-" Ye Chong was welcomed by the gang when he left the cabin, but the corner of his lips caused an

astonishment, as stained by blood. What kind of danger had this young man faced that he was actually wounded while being inside a mech? The mystery lingered within the mind of the gang. And he survived? Wow. The capabilities of the indifferent young man had convinced the gang.

"Are you alright?" asked Meng Fei'er, being the medical staff of the team, "Do you need help?"

The indifferent young man shook his head, as he took a glance at the members, who looked to be in the pink of health, well, at least their expression did not seem agonized, even though it looked a little pale. Ye Chong could have provided some help since whatever Lunatic Guan had taught him before could be used for medication as well, but he was still a novice compared to Meng Fei'er the trained.

Ye Chong's body had also recovered from the fatigue, as he felt the strength in his muscles.

The first thing on his priority list was to change the detection mode of the Coxcomb to Photon Mode, instead of Hologramic Mode which had proven its helplessness under such strong magnetic interference. The Hologramic System had been jammed, so it would be a sane choice to use the traditional Photon Mode instead to retain the visibility of the surrounding.

Of course Ye Chong had made up his mind to depart. The planet nearby had given him ample horror, which that unidentifiable lifeform underground was the most threatening. He had fulfilled his mission here, "Time to move."

Ye Chong was going to pull the lever and blast off to infinity and beyond, but then... There seemed to be a white spaceship traveling towards them, if what he saw on the photon display was right.

Oh no... Ye Chong's hope sank.

It could be the first time Ye Chong saw such model of spaceship,

but he could tell, that obviously it was a corvette from the MPA. There was a distinctive style on all MPA ships, from the aspect of weaponry that is. To someone who had been through the weaponry production like Ye Chong, no doubt that would be the first thing crossing in his mind. Whether the ship was a warship or an ordinary spaceship, well, a ship that was sent to a dangerous zone like this, it had to be a warship. Thought Ye Chong.

So the MPA came to join the party? Even the indifferent young man could not help but to frown upon the situation, as he reminisced the times he fought an actual corvette from the MPA. It was not a good experience. And the Coxcomb had zero experience in the warfield, his potential remained something to gamble with.

Ye Chong had automatically identified the incoming warship as being hostile. But how did the MPA get here? It was puzzling to Ye Chong since Vicente had only one student but there were already two organizations hovering around. Had the whole world found out the news?

The corvette of MPA travelled quickly. It was much quicker compared to the Coxcomb.

As they inched towards the Coxcomb, Ye Chong could finally see the exact appearance of the ship. Unlike the Twin Moon he had encountered before, this corvette had merely a curved body painted completely in white. And compared to the Coxcomb which had a length of 5km, this corvette was much smaller. Probably a mere 2 kilometers, Ye Chong supposed, although that huge pipe on top of the corvette was a gasp-worthy surprise.

Gradually Ye Chong could see the weaponry on that approaching corvette. He flinched. Wasn't that an electromagnetic cannon? Ye Chong who had produced few of his own immediately pinpointed that firepower setting. The tubes were plain white. Nevertheless they looked exactly like the tubes Ye Chong made.

"Ye, this is the Eclipse. Unlike Twin Moon, this is a warship of

single-moon, a conquering model, where its main firepowers are scattered into 22 electromagnetic firings. The main cannon

Is great but only suitable for passive-aggressive position, like on a galactic stronghold for example. The Eclipse is chiefly used for its reflexivity, its petite size and mobility while retaining a certain level of firepower," introduced Mu and he sounded as if he was reciting from a textbook.

"Mu, you know this warship?" asked Ye Chong. There had been occasions where Mu showed unreasonable amount of knowledge on the working of MPA, although he was not that shocked by the detail.

...

The artificial intelligence went silent for a moment. "Mhm, it seemed like there is a massive amount of information regarding various aspects of Mech-Pilot Association inside my databank, where part of them has been destroyed. Ye, I might have an undeniable association with the MPA, although I have yet discovered any information to justify that hypothesis."

"Mu..." Ye Chong could not help but to ask, "Do you want to know your past?"

"Not really." Flatly Mu replied, "My past self has nothing much to do with my current self. It was solely for formation of a much logical relationship. Ye, you are the only person both of us would approve. At least on this extent, both Shang and I would mutually agree."

"Oh no..."

"Ah... i-i-i-i-is this the warship?" Tai Zuo's face was pale as he stood by the horrified team of his, while watching the the visual of the Eclipse becoming bigger and clearer on the projection. This was probably the exact expression from anyone of the 5 major galaxies upon a warship's arrival, since the warship had become a

pronoun, a term of the history the moment the governments of the 5 major galaxies forbade the research and development of war units like the warship. They had gone extinct after the production was ceased, which their former glory as once a jaw-opener to everyone was fading into a discolored scenery.

But there Tai Zuo and his team were, seeing an actual warship heading towards them.

The arrival of the MPA seemed to have alarmed that 5 mechs watching at the corner. Well that was what Ye Chong speculated, since they should at least recognize that incoming warship being the MPA's.

"Hey!" Shouted Meng Fei'er, pointing at the other side of the projection, "Look! What is this?"

There was clearly a black dot at the corner, which seemed to be enlarging over time.

Ye Chong's expression melted...

The black dot approached them quickly, it did not take long before everyone recognized what it was.

"A-a-a-another warship?!" screamed Han Ben, as he looked at his mates in graceless manner.

Ye Chong was more silent than ever, as he knew.

It was a warship.

From the Black Coves.

The ships of the Black Coves always had a badge in the shape of a long, narrow leaf. It was really obvious, as the war units of Black Coves were thoroughly black. A glowing kind of black, probably they had infused the armor with their specialty, the black gold.

It was a major plot twist in Ye Chong's script. There were already the MPA and the Black Coves. It would not be far-fetched if a Sanctuary warship came nonchalantly into the scene soon,

supposed Ye Chong.

"Look at that!"

Right after his speculation went wild in his mind, he saw the third warship... in a shape of some kind of unnamed bird in the projection. Wait. A. Minute! Don't tell me... is it a reunion day for the three forces? Ye Chong could no longer word his feelings.

Well, the 5 mechs watching at the corner seemed to be more panicked than Ye Chong himself, as they continuously cursed the pilot of the warship from their side, "Where the hell are they? We need backups!" The sudden participation of the other 3 uninvited guests was pressuring them to death.

They probably had never thought that it was the signals they sent off that attracted the guests.

"Leader!" shouted one man. It was a relieving sight as the leader turned back, as the warship had finally arrived. The 5 mechs were calmer the moment an antique-looking warship flew into the scene. No more delay! The 5 mechs flew to their mothership like a group of lost children, being chased by the darkest nightmare in their dream.

Ye Chong ... He was at utter loss of words. The namely secret he had been holding had all gone into the light, it was as if the whole galaxy had known it. At least he made his travel fast or he would have to snatch the ores with the forces.

The reality? The planet was not wholly discovered by Vicente's student alone. There were 4 of them, where one turned out to be a big mouth. Seemingly unable to watch his mouth, he leaked the information which then everybody else knew their discovery. Then the 4 organizations around Ye Chong now. No doubt, no organization would go uninterested on a planet like this. Not only the inhabited planet would signify a free base, but also there would be resources, countless of them, thus the income, the rolling cash into their base.

The moment they knew the pioneering folks of the inhabited planet, they raided upon them, almost simultaneously. It was such a painful coincidence that they had to bump into each other every time they wanted to work something on the project. Inevitably, they had to fight for the 4 members and they realized none of them would overcome the other at this rate. So they shared the members. A member for each organization. And this particular 4th force joining the Battle Royale, had their first time banging their head against the 3 forces, and the funny thing was, they did not lose badly apparently.

After the 4 members had been escorted to each organization, their information extracted, the organization was well-aware of how their counterparts would have the same amount of information and how they would likely to lose anything if they never acted fast. So immediately after they sent off their ships to the planet, trying to get a share of the pie on the table.

It was surprising that the planet was capsuled in the magnetic force, that all their hologramic detection system had gone offline and in the end, they had never come across each other, nor they had seen the planet.

Fortunately, thanks to the 5 meddling mechs for sending off a signal, they had been guided and thus, reunited at this place. Wonder how the pilots on those 5 mechs would react if they knew themselves being the cause of the scene...

And this scene, this grand scene of a brewing storm was something not on everyone's script as well. None of them took action. The space was boundless and dark, where 4 warships and 1 spaceship were standing against each other, freezing. The 4 warships were familiar of existence of each other, nothing surprising. But the Coxcomb, the 5th ship that should not be here, was appearing odd in between them.

Everyone's eyes went upon the Coxcomb, as they wondered where the warship belonged to. The Coxcomb was humongous,

which was a perfect walking bullseye.

They were eager... very eager.

The team at the Coxcomb had their faces distorted into something indistinguishable. It was fear, but more than fear; it was hopeless, but more than hopeless. Meng Fei'er even covered her eyes, her body quivering. It was a pitiful sight.

Ye Chong remained calm.

Tai Zuo marveled at the calmness of this young man.

The 4 warships had the same thought - one side less meant one less share, one less share meant one more loot. Simple math, simple logic. Obviously neither of the side could no longer dominate the entire planet on its own. They got to share and if that was the case, lesser the share the merrier.

The armor of a Zika spaceship could be all sturdy and mighty but would be feeble when being gashed upon by the other warships. Mech? It would be a joke, all of the forces were the expert of mech-piloting.

The forces thirsted the loot, as they approached the spaceship together, like the 4 foxes eyeing a wild hare.

Just when everyone was going to flaunt their offenses, the harmless-looking rabbit raised its fang out of sudden!

It was a plot twist. It was not in the script. And everyone was gasping, heavily.

Chapter 220: Shockwave

The length of a Zika-graded spaceship would be about 5 kilometers. A whale in the space one could call. The warships, for they sought dexterity and momentum, would be designed petite and light. The difference in size was blatant as they flew towards the Coxcomb.

?

In visuals of every ship, the Coxcomb suddenly rose its bars, and within the opening, countless pipes were raised towards them. The laser firing devices were filled between the remaining gaps.

And they thought they were the foxes, hunting for the hare, which turned out to be quite the opposite. The dark tubes were exerting fearsome brutality. The laser firing devices were quiet, inactive but one could imagine the density of the firing with that amount on a giant ship.

The change in the script was unacceptable to the forces, where most of them dazed upon. That expression of theirs would make people wonder if they were really the elites in combat.

"Hey! Aren't those electromagnetic cannons?" The scream of one man from the Eclipse caught the attention of everybody else. They knew their cannons and a glance was more than enough for them to verify the validity of the object before them. They crowded upon the visuals and got into a noisy discussion. The leader of the ship however, was pale.

"Oh my MPA, that's really an electromagnetic cannon."

"Stop messing around, the cannon is our secret weapon, how would that warship have it?"

"Beats me. Someone has probably leaked it."

"The confidentiality department should be executed, like right now."

...

The captain was at loss of idea too. He had been the captain for years and there had been cases where he led the entire crew on the Eclipse successfully. No one had known the ship much better than himself. The main firepower of the Eclipse, the electromagnetic cannons, their properties were something he knew like the back of his hands. The weapon could give a large area a heavy blow, in spite of its deadly weakness, the high energy consumption, which eventually limited the performance of the Eclipse in offenses since they lacked the space to install more batteries.

And there was this Zika graded spaceship precisely, the warship holding an outrageous amount of electromagnetic cannons, that had outnumbered those on the captain's ship. The captain was overwhelmed that he corrected his perception of this warship before him, that it was clearly no longer an ordinary spaceship, rather it was a killing warship. Although he could not give the exact figure on the number of tubes at that ship, he was well-aware that he and his crew would be the one sinking under the foe's bombardment instead. Being an experienced captain, his comment did stand a certain extent of credibility. Of course, if the foe wanted to launch the cannon and initiate the war, he as the captain himself would not hold back but to send off his elites and demonstrate what true rapports between the captain and his crew were. His crew was not something to be defeated by some random warships. With his expertise, it should be a 50:50 in the end.

Furthermore, the outnumbering electromagnetic cannons would also suggest that the foe depleted the energy of the ship much faster. Zika-graded warship might be giant in size to be convincing enough to have tons of batteries, but one must know that it would also require a major crew to fully pilot the entire ship. Thus, there would not be a sustainable amount of batteries for multiple electromagnetic blows, since this ship was not for warring purposes in the first place, as justified by the sturdiness of its

armor, which was something never competent compared to the real warship. It also would sail sluggishly and make turnings much later than the others. These would inevitably be the lethal weaknesses of the ship.

The SWOT analysis ran rapidly in the mind of the captain.

His expression would be priceless if he were to be informed that there were no more than 6 persons on that ship.

!

"Observers!" The eyes of the captain froze the moment they lay on a specific spot of the ship, as if they made a major discovery, "Enlarge the visual! Now!" The voice roared throughout the room, as the face of the captain tightened. Temper, agony resounded and silenced the remaining crew as their eyes set upon the enraged captain, wondering what had gotten into their wise and usually undisturbed leader.

The observers on duty who had been adjusting the Photon Visual System shuddered. Their experience and knowledge saved them for they managed to perform what the captain asked within milliseconds although being extremely panicked.

"Enlarge the cannons." The voice was profound.

The electromagnetic cannons of the Coxcombs were immediately enlarged, to a point where everyone in the room could see the details, how dark the tubes were.

And the face of captain ran as cold as the tubes in the visuals.

What ... is this? How would the captain not immediately identify it as being made out of something he recognized, after all these years he had been warring with the Black Coves? Black gold was the metal exclusive to the Black Covers and any metal coated by the black gold would exert a kind of strange glow, just like this. It was something impossible to be imitated by the other alloys, which the members of the MPA authority would resentfully covet upon.

These were only extractable deep inside the Black Coves, they were likely going to stay as a green-eyed monster for all eternity, although their research on a replacement, a replica never stopped once. Their research had shown that the black gold had much stronger expression in energy-based weaponry compared to physical weaponry for its energy activity was very high, which would be perfect for energy-based weaponry production.

The details of the research were not something open to the public, not even a frontline member like the captain himself, but he was once informed the information on the black gold accidentally during an occasion. It was irony although Black Coves had such a god's gift, they were lagging way behind in development of energy-based weaponry. It would be considered as a miracle despite all the overpowered effects of black gold, they remained at a similar standard of capabilities.

And there he was, with his eyes wavering at a thing he was confused of. The tubes were obviously made out of black gold, which were installed on electromagnetic cannons, something that should be exclusive to the MPA. The foe was one with the technological standard of MPA and the amazing metallurgical development on the black gold application, who also built an actual set of electromagnetic cannons. The firepower... the firepower... It would be something the captain too feared to predict. The MPA never once had the opportunity to perform sufficient experiments on the black gold infusion as the ores were very scarce.

Assuming only the captain understood such fact on the MPA's Eclipse, the Black Coves should be well-aware of the situation as well. They knew their black gold better than the MPA, even though their focus on close-combats had led them an underdeveloped weaponry. It was a known fact among the Black Coves on the application of black gold on energy-based weaponry, while also the electromagnetic cannons were something they long

coveted. No matter how hard they had tried in the past, they never got their hands on the actual print of electromagnetic cannon.

Now, after that round of astounding discovery, there was one question in all of them.

Where did he get this much of black gold?

Black gold was in fact exclusive to the Black Covers but it was uncommon. Quite the contrary to the captain's assumption, being naturally a strategical material as well as an expensive metal ore, its transport was carefully watched the whole time. It would be impossible for it to accidentally leak to someone out there to be made into tubes of electromagnetic cannon.

Also, not only the Black Coves and the MPA were at confusion, the Sanctuary and that mysterious organization seemed to have noticed the same.

And everyone was there, speculating, wondering, hypothesizing, inferring the identity of the leading one in the Zika ship.

The hare had transformed into something beyond their control. The supposedly weakest one had ascended and outraced them to be one with the strongest firepower, which made everybody else hold their fire. The weaponry on that ship was one to be feared of. No one was confident enough to assure their victory upon fighting against the ship officially, since it was simple - the moment they were damaged, they would be weakened and very likely they would lose their former share of the loots in the end as they would be forced out of the race prematurely. Moreover, it had been a bloodshed known fact that each force had bad blood with each other, written in countless bleeding histories one would gash upon, given one of the forces were weakened, how would they miss the golden opportunity to deliver the necessary final blow?

A new rule, in the form of a new balance was set upon the playing teams.

...

Out of sudden, the shrill came after. Everyone was shocked. Ye Chong frowned, his men were astounded, as never they would expect an undisturbed young man like Ye Chong having such a disturbed expression. What kind of monster would make such sound? The question sprouted in their heads.

It was merely a frown, which Ye Chong withdrew from soon after.

"Mu, let's leave this place now," Ye Chong first contacted Mu.

"Yes. Logical suggestion accepted. Execute promptly," Mu acknowledged.

The combat squads of the 4 warships looked at their mates, especially after seeing how that largest warship was backing away upon hearing that strange shrill.

Did the ship... chicken out?

The Coxcomb might seemed to chicken out and backed away, but his cannons were still pointing right at those 4 warships around, so the warships around did not take any action, although their leaders were dissatisfied of their helplessness. On a second thought, that would be good, one less member to the game, one less share to be given away. The captains snickered, as experience had reasoned the Coxcomb as the foolish one who seemed to be assuming a war was happening between them. "Well, not today." They would not be warring each other and this foolish ship would not stand a chance to steal the loots from them in the midst of chaos. If the ship still insisted his uninvited participation, no doubt the 4 ships would join forces and get rid of him.

The strange shrill did slip through their ears. It was never part of their attention. It would be a joke if a warship powerful like theirs to be defeated by a mere living thing.

Ye Chong was relieved. His exit was a peaceful one, as he saw the

remaining warships shrinking in his visuals. He wondered how the warships would handle the monster if the monster ever got out of the ground. But he already speculated a painful fight if he were the one involved. Regarding what could happen to the 4 warships, "None of my business."

Ye Chong felt safer. There was no medium for the hypersonic to travel in the space, so he would not be wounded. That hypersonic was not something to mess with.

Ye Chong was at peace, especially after he confirmed to have left out the proximity of that peculiar planet.

The other members on his team, well, were at horror. Their injuries remained and now they were shocked almost to their death.

"Was...w-was that a warship?" asked Meng Fei'er, biting her lips, never wanting to believe what she saw and what she was going to say, but she said it anyway. Their eyes set upon Ye Chong, who were nonchalantly on his seat. Obviously the young man had known more darkness in the background than the team.

"Yes." Ye Chong found her question a little strange so he took a glance at her and nodded, "Those were the warships." Well it was because the Coxcomb was also a warship in disguise, just that the members never got to see his true appearance.

"No...No..." Out of the blue, teardrops rolled off the maiden's cheek, "Is there going to be a war soon?" Her expression was not agitated, softly her question went.

The question was probably what everybody else was thinking. The impression upon seeing a warship appearing out of nowhere, they would associate its appearance with war itself. Fear filled the men's eyes the moment Meng Fei'er voiced her doubts. They were not the young folks, they had experienced, and had understood the brutality of war.

"We would know after we got into Tappero galaxy." Ye Chong's voice was low, "But, whether there would be a war, it would be only a matter of time." He was surprised that the 3 forces could retain their balance and relationship for so long. But there was already a plot twist in their book, the emergence of the 4th force would no doubt lead to a transition period, the balance had already been broken, and to build a new balance to accommodate the 4th force, they would have to do it the painful way.

"Ha... H..." Her voice was shaky, her tears were streaming, her mates were escaping the reality. No way Ye Chong would comprehend her feelings, the feeling of a resident re-experiencing the war itself after years of peace being in the 5 major galaxies.

Even if Ye Chong could compute her feelings, he would only think of ways to improve his strength, rather than being somber over what already happened, to give better chance of his survival if a war were to happen.

Ye Chong got to a single room, where Multipede was placed. It was an isolated room for Ye Chong believed, the lesser people knew the source of his strength, the better it was to himself.

And it was Ye Chong's favorite past time - counting the loots.

He took out the Teardrops from his bag. One... Two... Oh he had seven of them. The Teardrops were indeed a marvel but similar to Do-Kun stone, they were something unusable at the moment, unlike those ores inside Multipede, practical and immediately useable.

Speaking of Multipede, it was terrorizing to look at its appearance. The hypersonic attack nearly murdered the machine. The armors were either cracked or shattered. Most of its mechanical legs were broken. And Mu forced Multipede to travel through the winding tunnels, one could say it was close to malfunction.

The transmuted energy ores on the other hand, were doing

good

And after Mu's explanation, Ye Chong finally understood what exactly the ores were.

Chapter 221: Chaos Has Arrived

Energy ores, the mineralites imbued with a kind of energy, either by nature or by artificial means and here they were, lying within the hands of Ye Chong, exerting an amazing glow. They were formerly uncommon ores of metals which never contained any energy activity. It was then the exposure to the Teardrops they transmuted, as they gained the energy and began giving off that beautiful glow.

It was as if a metamorphosis for the ores, a transformation that lifeforms would have undergone, a mutation in their state, thus the name, Transmuted Energy Ore.

It was Mu's speculation that these energy ores were transmuted due to the influence of the Teardrops, which sounded really stunning to Ye Chong for it was his first time of hearing such strange theory, where the ores were glowing merely over the effects of those specks of Teardrops.

And Ye Chong's curiosity was one again rose by these seven little stones of tears.

He felt the Teardrops within his palm carefully. They were warm, giving off faint glow in pale green. They were not really sizable, with the largest being slightly bigger than his thumb. And the one which Ye Chong snatched from Tai Zuo was the smallest among them, while having the closest shape to a teardrop.

He rolled the seven stones between his palms. He took a glance, he took a second glance... Nothing was coming out in his head. Eventually he surrendered to the mystery and gave up observing, declaring the stones were useable but, "Not yet... not yet..." Bitterly he smiled.

The lower-graded transmuted energy ores were of much better use to Ye Chong currently. And he had a fruitful excavation of them, where ores of the entire cave were picked up by Multipede.

If what Mu had stated was true, those ores were rare mineralites before. That was truly unbelievable for a small cave underground containing that many variety.

Ye Chong poured the piles of ores over the floor.

Within twinkling of eyes, colorful glows illuminated the room, dazzling as before to Ye Chong's eyes. There was one untold fact from Mu, the energy ores, despite being a slightly lower grade than the Teardrops, they were also extremely precious kind of gems, while Ye Chong were fortunate enough to have a mini mountain of them. Imagine if Ye Chong were to auction these ores, he would be richer than the billionaires in the 5 major galaxies.

Well, Mu knew his information choice well. Even if he told Ye Chong so, Ye Chong would not be reacting much as he lacked the interest towards wealth acquisition, till maybe at some point where he needed that money to make the necessary purchases then perhaps he would realize.

Contrary to the tinkling coins, the strategic resources, the necessity of life were something he would go strongly possessive of. Trash Planet was known as a planet which severely lacked useable resources, where one could take months or even years to ever dig out anything useable. No one else in the galaxy recognized the importance of consumables than he himself. As he was raised in a place where the strong lingered, the weak be eradicated, every second could lead to a different outcome standing in between the dead or alive.

Ye Chong took a look at the pile of ores and he began sorting them. One could say it would be an entertainment to view the glow of the pile of ores, but one could also say sorting that pile of ores could be potentially a maltreatment.

No doubt, the sorting process was carried out under the guidance of Mu, since technically Ye Chong was "ore-blind". But it was not as smooth-sailing as one would imagine even under Mu's valuable

tips and assistance, Ye Chong - for he lacked the basic understanding of these ores - was having a headache 10 minutes after the commencement, since technically Mu had never stopped his explanation for one second. Ye Chong could have a superior memory, but anyone could have gone mad under this constantly goose-feeding like lecture.

Ye Chong truly felt that it would be a much more brilliant idea to have Mu sorting the ores himself. Nevertheless, he knew the artificial intelligence's purpose of doing this. It was, like always, for his own good, as through this he would not only gain experience but also knowledge. Well, it would be a different story if Shang was standing there. "That Shang would do it out of plain laziness." Ye Chong swore, the corners of his lips were slightly raised. Shang should be coming in a few days.

"Ye, focus. Focus," reminded Mu the very second he noticed the boy before him was thinking of something nonsensical. Ye Chong hurriedly carried on sorting, as he was all ears of the lecture on the composition, as well as the reactivity of the ores.

The colorful ores were sorted into different piles. The smallest pile before Ye Chong was the one that would come in handy immediately. There were actually varieties in these ores, and they were sorted quite equally in amount. But the number was discouraging, it would not be sufficient for basic mass-production.

The uncommon ore of the highest amount in Ye Chong's inventory was surprisingly the black gold.

And according to the information obtained from Mu's databank, these ores apparently were obliged to fuse with other uncommon metals to maximize their capabilities. And judging by the number of other uncommon minerals Ye Chong had, the tiny pile of transmuted energy ores would do him the greatest favor in long run. Well, he could have also used the other piles of energy ores but he would have to discard the few types of energy ores in that tiny pile before him to fit into the formula instead.

Ye Chong's current supply of resources could be said as vast, although the utilization was a joke. That tiny pile before him for example, to even begin using them Ye Chong would need to first arrive at Tappero galaxy to make purchases of the minerals not inside his inventory.

Regarding the happening at the cave underground that day, despite long exchanges between Mu and Ye Chong, there was yet a definite conclusion, even though Ye Chong had made sense of parts of the phenomena. The disc for example, was a result of intensive spatial distortion, which then formed some kind of a portal.

The study of space science had matured and was well facilitated by today's standard, the dimensional keystone for mech-deployment for example was the masterpiece of space science application. Then there was also space-warp which could also be considered as an impeccable technique developed by space scientists. And within the 5 major galaxies, space physics were the compulsory introductory course among the trainees. Well the study was not all that fancy like its name, for it had already become the part and parcel of our daily lives.

Except for Ye Chong probably... who had never participated in the education system once before. The dimensional keystone for mechs was one of the few parts he could not craft from scratch, reason being, no one had ever mentioned the working of it before, not even the Aurora or Mu. Among the few expertise in the hands of Ye Chong, alchemy and combats were currently at their greatest, while mech-production and piloting were at a very strange stage. Regarding mech-production and piloting, Ye Chong probably knew what an advanced senior pilot would know, but he would know nothing of a pilot on his first week would have been taught.

For space physics, he practically believed that he already had the best teacher in the entire galaxy, Mu. But Mu still was unable to

calculate the exact figures of the spatial distortion that day. Man... what lies beyond that dark disc of distortion? What kind of lifeforms lingered within the world beyond, being all mighty and horrifying? Who or what had created such distortion? Was it a part of natural phenomena? Or the lifeforms were the culprit of this mischief? Or... Ummm...

There were so many mysteries unsolved to quench Ye Chong's thirst for the truth. There were hardly anything intriguing to Ye Chong currently and he bit the bait on this case was due to his experience and recognition of the strength of this mysterious living thing.

This was probably the strongest organism he had ever seen.

The strength was not considered negligible for Mu, which probably triggered Mu's motivation to fix himself. Ye Chong could feel that but he was also helpless, as it was truthfully impossible to fix Mu. There were too many obstacles to overcome. Yes, Mu's databank did consist of detailed information on formation of his components, there were even the methodology to extract certain ores. The catch was, it would include about 52 types of metals of various colors and 17 non-metals in a formula, which none of those were found in Ye Chong's inventory. Furthermore, among those materials, 11 of them turned out to be materials as rare as the Do-Kun stone. One could state that Mu was a conglomeration of uncommon materials. And that. That was only the first obstacle standing in their way. The second... well... Mu's damaged components included the engines, the cabin and the left arm. Cabin was not much of an issue, unlike engines... Ye Chong remained puzzled looking at the blueprint of the engine. Arm? With his skill, it would be a miracle if he could finish building an arm before the next nova happened.

The journey to fully repair Mu was far and nearly unreachable. But building weapons for him was quite a practical goal at the moment. Mu lost most of his firepower for being unarmed the

whole time but it was no longer the same because they had collected quite an amount of energy ores, whereby it would not be far-fetched to at least build a weapon for the artificial intelligence.

But this rose Ye Chong's curiosity again. What kind of weapon would Mu use? The anticipation...

Other than that, they had also obtained the fluid of Twin Sisters, which was safely kept inside the alchemy lab. And he had a collection of the best bones he could think of. The only pity in his inventory could probably be that dagger, it was a gift from Gu Shaoze and he had spent all these years having it as his life savior, his loyal partner. But then... mhm... maybe it was time to build a new dagger. Thought Ye Chong as his eyes rolled over the ores.

Ye Chong spent the whole day in his room and never entertained the 5 guests on his ship. Well, not like they could do anything to the ship. They seemed to have transformed into the scaredy cats since the moment war was mentioned. It had been rooted in their conversations whenever they grouped together at one table, where Meng Fei'er would lose control of her tears without fail.

It was soon when the Coxcomb hit the edge of Tappero galaxy. The folks were feeling great, they seemed to have the look of lost souls finding the way back home, except for Ye Chong, as usual.

Getting back into the 5 major galaxies signified that they could obtain signal, they were connected to the world once again. Under the demand of the 5 frightened cats and Ye Chong's curiosity over the status, Mu turned on the signal transmitter.

"This is Tappero daily. We are sorry to inform you that..."

Ye Chong was right.

The war had already happened.

It was chaotic inside the 5 major galaxies. The one who initiated the war... contrary to Ye Chong's prediction, was none of the 3 forces, rather it was the Freedom alliance, a group he had never

heard before. It was probably the organization those 5 mechs and that ancient-looking warship were from. It had to be them. They should be avenging the insults they had been getting all these years while being in the dark.

They were the first alliance to declare ownership of the Fal. Then Black Coves declared their ownership over Tappero. Almost immediately after, MPA also declared their influence over Tappero. Of course the Sanctuary would not sit back and watch their territories disappearing, they stood up and also declared their ownership over Cyana. Csebesini, strangely, retained its unowned status, even though being surrounded by the 4 major galaxies.

And the galaxies were at a fiasco.

Very soon after their declaration, the 4 forces began cleansing their territories to strengthen their rulership. The trainees, the members of the foreign forces in the territory shall be wiped away from history. It began with the Freedom alliance, where they brutally murdered the other forces in their territory, like eliminating the cockroaches in the kitchen. It happened too abruptly that none of them could make it out. And the Freedom alliance took a smart turn for they had already withdrawn all members lurking at the other galaxies to minimize their loss.

The residents were stupefied by the chaos. It was a mutation in their residence. Within a night, the peace, the harmony were no longer a fact, but a history.

The war was gruesome.

The Freedom alliance gained the most from the plot twist this time, while the other 3 forces, as much as the foreign forces had implanted their influences within the territory, it was challenging for them to eliminate the "others" in their place. The cleansing was hindered. One could already imagine the situation seeing how a handful of mechs could already cause such devastation back on Windstar. And the 3 forces were obviously holding a vaster amount

than that.

The galaxies which their ownership were declared had been turned into ruins of flames and screams. Csebesini was surprisingly looking like a heaven among the hells, where flocks and flocks of residents hurried their way moving there.

As the war went on, major inflation happened in the market. Shortage was everywhere when the residents thought it happened once and only once hundred years ago. Resources like the metals were a goner in the market. The safety control was horrible, where pirates rampaged throughout the area. They filled the place as they plundered. Pilots were at high demands, for they wielded the strength to protect people. Everyone would need a pilot at their home and companies began employing the pilots batches after batches.

Warships were no longer a rare and frightening sight to behold as the 4 forces started sending out their armies in ships. Residents were horrified at first, then they grew numb of them.

Listening to the transmission... the folks were on the ground, except for Ye Chong. The hologram of the planets was then projected, where craters and flare could be clearly seen.

"No...No..." The tears of Meng Fei'er fell off her cheeks.

And that... was when chaos has arrived.

Chapter 222: Mu's Weapon

"Everyone, I think it's time for you all to leave." Ye Chong declared plainly.

With the exception of Meng Fei'er, wearing a complicated expression, the rest of them all felt relieved. All this while, they were afraid that this cold young man would kill them all in the end, since he never did seem particularly merciful. Tying up loose ends like that was a sure way to keep things a secret, and Ye Chong certainly knew that. However, even though Ye Chong was not one to squirm when it came to killing, this did not mean that he enjoyed doing it. He still remembered how much he yearned to meet another human being back on the trash planet.

Besides, he was slowly realizing that there were many other methods that were as effective as killing.

As an example, Shang had demonstrated this method called "threatening" on planet Blue Ocean. Ye Chong thought it was a very creative way of doing things. Little did he know that Shang was only imitating what he saw in the movies.

Ye Chong stuck to this method. A good method did not depend on how often he used it, but on whether the all the conditions required were met.

Ye Chong asked Mu to search the virtual world for any information related to these five people. The report was filled with so many details that perhaps even they themselves were not aware of it all. Hence, when Ye Chong went through them in his steady and cold demeanor, the five of them all paled until their faces were all drained of blood.

Ye Chong never imagined that his expression and intonation, together with what he was doing right then, would make such a perfect match. The five of them stared at Ye Chong with fearful eyes, as though they were facing the Devil that came straight from

the Underworld.

The five of them had already decided that this young man came from some aristocratic family. To them, only an aristocrat could gather so much intel. The power of aristocratic families was not one they could stand against. Before Ye Chong had finished, the five of them had decided to forever keep secret everything that had happened. The consequences of doing otherwise were devastating. They shuddered at the thought of their loved ones suffering due to their indiscretion.

When Coxcomb landed on an inhabited planet at the far edges of Tappero Galaxy, Ye Chong had decided to let them leave.

This was, after all, right at the edges of the Tappero Galaxy. The war had not reached here, the locals still living a normal life. Only the occasional expression of fear on their faces betrayed any traces of the war.

As the hatch opened, all of them could not wait to leave. However, in order not to offend the young man, they still walked slowly to the hatch. Meng Fei'er looked back at Ye Chong, her eyes filled with emotions as she bit her tender lips. Her eyes were unreadable to Ye Chong.

"Fei'er!" This came from Vicente, who loved her as much as his own daughter. He shook his head and sighed softly.

Vicente shook Meng Fei'er out of her reverie. She gathered herself and returned to her team. Pa Er also looked back occasionally, but his eyes were directed at Ye Chong's metal laboratory, obviously reluctant to leave that world class laboratory.

After the five of them left, Ye Chong could finally do as he wished in the starship. In truth, Coxcomb had too many things unsuited for public knowledge. However, after the five of them left, Ye Chong's work could finally begin.

Ye Chong had too many things to do. Mu was able to procure a good amount of rare metals through some of his crafty ways. Today, these metals were all strictly controlled materials. Ye Chong could only marvel at Mu's resourcefulness.

At the same time, Ye Chong also received some of the Five Galaxies' most advanced laboratory equipment. These equipment were all very costly, and were only built upon request. They had only completed them days ago, and delivered them to Ye Chong after contacting Mu. More than a hundred mech pilots had escorted the goods to them. When Ye Chong saw their grand entourage, he thought he was seeing space pirates!

With these equipment, Ye Chong could do even more.

Mu finally took out his weapon schematics. His excitement from receiving those new equipment was quickly replaced by deep vexation. Ye Chong had never seen Mu produce any simple schematics - all of them were unthinkably dense. This time was no exception.

Ye Chong could only determine from its profile that it was probably an energy gun. However, the insides were filled with photon circuits so complicated that Ye Chong could only wonder - was it really just an energy gun?

Fortunately, Ye Chong did not lack the eagerness to study. Besides, mechs were always something he was interested in, and mech weapons were important components to a mech. Whatever schematic Mu produced would definitely be nothing ordinary, and if Mu would use the weapon himself, then it must be something extraordinary.

Ye Chong could not remember how many days had passed since he began to study the schematics. He did not mind it at all. Ye Chong was obsessed with his studies now, the way the Aurora's elders could be. Once he understood it, Ye Chong began to build the weapon.

Ye Chong's recent mastery of minute motor control now came in handy. The energy gun's inner photon circuits were intricate and complicated, and Ye Chong felt like he was treading on ice as he put the circuit together, slowly and carefully. Any mistakes, and he would have to start all over again. Fortunately, the process went quite smoothly, thanks to Ye Chong's inhumanly steady hands.

Nonetheless, the immense pressure was suffocating. When Ye Chong was finished with the main parts of the photon circuits, he felt much relieved. However, he made some errors in smelting the energy ores, since it was his first time handling them.

From transmuted energy ores, one could synthesize high quality metals. Some had surfaces like ocean waves, gleaming in a metallic blue luster. This was an energized blue zinc. The emery gold looked just as impressive. The metallic ingot was interspersed with gold glitter, and shone with a surprisingly sharp dazzle. All the metals purified from these transmuted energy ores were beautiful. Ye Chong kept them everywhere in the laboratory, and the laboratory now looked like a jewelry shop, and was probably the most dazzling laboratory in the world.

According to Mu, after these metals undergone an energy transmutation, their properties could become the very difference. Of course, Ye Chong was not aware of the rarity of energy ores. In truth, energy ores were rarer than he thought. The conditions for ores to undergo an energy transmutation process were highly coincidental. Ye Chong was simply very lucky this time.

No matter how attractive something was, it was simply human nature to gradually get used to it. Ye Chong did not pay further attention to those aesthetically impressive metal ingots, and continued with his work.

When Ye Chong was finally done, he took much pride in his work.

Recursion was a sniper rifle measuring six meters in length, its

slender body looking quite fragile, lacking the menacing quality of a weapon. The gun was in alternating blues and whites, matching Mu's body, but the inside of the gun's barrel was lined with a thin layer of emery gold. The blue surface was covered in a natural wave texture, like the masterpiece of an art maestro. At the tip of the rifle was a large blue optical targeting scope, looking a little odd and out of place.

In general, however, the rifle had a simple appearance. Ye Chong included none of the ornamental designs in the schematics, since he could not be bothered with those useless features.

As the one who built the weapon, Ye Chong was confident of the power of this sniper rifle with the name Recursion. Its high accuracy was not due to the blue optical targeting scope on the rifle body. Recursion's targeting system and Mu's holographic scanning system were linked, enabling long distance shooting accuracy.

The optical targeting scope was an addition of Ye Chong's. From his experience on the primary planet, Ye Chong found the geomagnetic interference negatively affecting Mu's holographic scanning system, reducing its effective range greatly. It would be better to use the traditional way of optical targeting in similar situations. Ye Chong installed the scope for this purpose, and Mu agreed with his decision.

In truth, Ye Chong had another idea. He found that field interferences could be fatal in battles involving mechs or warships. The way most mech pilots were unfamiliar with optical systems was astonishing to Ye Chong. He thought back then that such interferences were advantageous for him, and creating this interference in an artificial way would be beneficial for him. Of course, realizing this idea was still quite difficult.

Recursion did not fire heat rays or laser beams, but a beam composed of recursive particle waves. Of course, Ye Chong had never heard of it. The most powerful wave he knew of was the nanowaves. In truth, if the rifle shot out nanowaves, Ye Chong was

prepared to believe that the weapon was designed by the MPA. The style was too similar to theirs. Even now, Ye Chong suspected that this weapon was actually an advanced mech weapon of the MPA. However, when it came to the complicated relationship between Mu and the MPA, if Ye Chong asked Mu about it, the mech would probably reply with, "Based on available information, the origin is unknown!"

Recursion could also fire recursive particle cannon shots. Should he call it a cannon instead? Ye Chong imagined Mu with Recursion in hand, a massive beam exiting the rifle's barrel towards a vulnerable part of the enemy's warship with incredible accuracy, destroying the warship with one hit. Ye Chong mourned for whatever enemy that would cross Mu's path in the future.

In addition to Recursion, Ye Chong also made a close range rapid fire device for Mu. Ye Chong knew from watching Mu's fight with the iron lizard that he could definitely use a close range weapon like a lance, but Mu seemed to prefer shooting more, and so Ye Chong's suggestion was rejected.

According to Mu's suggestion, Ye Chong also chose red titanium, an especially strong material to make a dagger. This dagger looked exactly like the one Gu Shaoze gifted to Ye Chong, but with much better properties. Red titanium was red in color; after energy transmutation, it turned into a darker shade of red, like blood. Ye Chong's dagger looked marvelous - from its red luster and blood-red handle, one could tell that it was no ordinary weapon. However, Ye Chong was vexed by it. While the energy transmutation greatly enhanced the metal's properties, the polished luster was too eye-catching.

With all of his work completed, Ye Chong finally relaxed.

Mu was happy with Recursion, seeing that he quickly slung it onto his back. After Mu was completely charged, he would be covered with a layer of mysterious luster. With the blue-white Recursion on his back, Ye Chong believed that Mu would make a

formidable entrance.

While Ye Chong encountered a few space pirates along the way, none of them dared to challenge the massive Coxcomb. The journey went smoothly. The MPA was apparently still occupied with controlling Tappero. Ye Chong had come by a few of the MPA's warships, but they had all flew past Coxcomb hastily without paying him attention.

Since Mu had spent a lot of time instructing Ye Chong to build Recursion, using up even Shang's time, Shang would spend more time outside in his next turn. This was the result of a discussion between Mu and Shang. Shang was positively intoxicated when he described his victory.

According to their plan, they were now heading towards Fal Galaxy to investigate matters concerning his Papa, which had troubled Ye Chong ever since he found out. Ye Chong was determined to get to the bottom of it. Shang, on the other hand, waved Recursion wildly and clamored about bulldozing over anyone who stood in their way. Ye Chong could only smile helplessly at him.

Mu had already set the flight course for Ye Chong. While Ye Chong was busy with building Recursion, Coxcomb was following its planned trajectory. Now, they had reached the midpoint between Tappero and Fal.

Tappero and Fal were not joined. Between them was a wide gap of no man's territory, a vast, empty space without even a single planet in it. They could only reach Fal with a warp jump, and Mu had already calculated where they should do this.

Fal Galaxy was the one galaxy Ye Chong was most familiar with. They were close now. Ye Chong looked out towards the stars through the window, falling into a reverie.

"Here we go!" Shang yelled enthusiastically as he initiated the warp jump.

Chapter 223: An Unexpected Battlefield

Ye Chong did not expect to be hit even before Coxcomb could stabilize itself after the warp jump. He shook his head to clear his mind, and looked outside.

Here, in outer space, were numerous starships. Mechs were flying everywhere. Laser beams were shot, creating silent but bright and violent explosions in the skies.

Ye Chong was startled. Was he really at Fal Galaxy?

"Shang, what's happening?" Ye Chong asked Shang for guidance.

"It looks like a fleet of ships were attacked by space pirates." Shang was also uncertain. It was chaos out there. They could see damaged starships and mechs engaged in battle everywhere.

Ye Chong studied the scene, and agreed with Shang's deductions. None of the starships here appeared to be warships, and that was a relief to Ye Chong. As long as they did not meet the Freedom Alliance, Ye Chong was not too worried.

What was odd, however, was how this starship fleet was composed of starships of all kinds of models. Usually, a starship fleet would be made up of ships of the same model for convenient resupply. The fleet he was seeing now was of the extreme opposite. Besides, there was only one large ship, a Zika class starship. It was designed very differently from Coxcomb, its angular body made it look more agile than Coxcomb.

Fid looked calm on the surface, but was growing anxious inside. The battle was stretching on, and the pirates more than he expected.

The entire fleet was mostly made up of civilians, hoping to escape the war by moving to the Csebesini Galaxy. Due to the high risk of encountering space pirates in their route, they had hired three mech squads for security.

In truth, they were already targeted by the space pirates right from the beginning. This mostly civilian starship fleet was a ripe target for the space pirates. Hence, the surrounding space pirates had come together to plan this assault.

The situation would not have been so damning, had not one of hired mech squads actually ran off out of fear of the large crew of space pirates. Now, it was only Fid's Oak Leaves and another mech squad called Red Lion fighting against the attack. Many of the civilians had also took to their mechs and joined the fray, battling against the space pirates to save their loved ones. It was because of them that the battle had not ended swiftly against their favor.

The battle was more vicious than the space pirates expected. They did not expect the mellow civilians to actually fight with their lives. These civilians had fought without regard of their own safety, coming in droves like moths into the fire, hoping to end spread of danger in exchange for their lives.

They all knew that their loved ones were right behind them. From here on out, they could only move forwards! Everyone was emboldened by desperation. Strong men led the battle, followed by the young, then the women. It all happened silently, without any screaming or moaning. No one hoped to survive the fight, only wishing that their lives were enough to save the elderly and the children in the starships. For this meager possibility, they entered the battlefield.

The battlefield was silent, even as mechs clashed in sparks, metal against metal, ending in fire, light, blood and flesh splattering into outer space. In their suicidal attack, they only hoped to die with the enemy. As the explosion engulfed them, they looked back at their starships with a soft gaze while the fire consumed their bodies and reduced them into ashes.

The space pirates paid their price heavily for every starship they won.

Fid understood the severity of the situation, but there was nothing he could do. Just then, his second suddenly pointed towards the holographic screen and said, "Squad Captain, look!"

Fid raised his eyes to the screen, and saw a massive starship slowly heading towards them.

The sudden appearance of such a massive starship had gained the attention of the commanding station from both sides. However, the head of the space pirates found that it was only one starship, and felt relieved. Under the circumstances, no one would possibly volunteer to get involved in the mess. Since the other party was only a single ship, they would simply finish it off as well if it decided to interfere. The head of the space pirate crew watched the bulky starship with a cold smile. So what if it was a Zika class starship? His men were now all hungry for a fight, and he still had control over his crew, so he was not afraid of any surprises coming from them.

Ye Chong studied the battlefield on his holographic screen with a cool look. Those people charged towards their enemies without hesitation, even knowing that their lives were forsaken. Behind them was an alloy door. Without any sound, the holographic screen illuminated Ye Chong's face, hiding his expression.

When Ye Chong saw the children through the window behind the alloy door, he finally understood. One of the space pirates had finally cleared the last line of hurdle. The fight he went through with the suicidal opponents had also left him with a deep thirst for blood. The floor was littered with broken mech fragments. The children behind the alloy door were all crying in fear as he smiled menacingly with greed. In a moment, once he destroyed the alloy door, all the treasures within would be his! If all those civilians were stopping him so earnestly, there must be something very precious within!

"Disparity in strength could not be overcome by courage alone," thought Ye Chong. This strengthened his resolution to become

stronger. Only then could he truly be in control of his own destiny.

Suddenly, one of the heavily damaged mechs on the floor rose and pulled the space pirate into an embrace. The mech activated its engines and went straight against the ship's wall. They broke through the already damaged hull of the starship, flying into outer space.

This sudden turn of events caught the space pirate off guard.

Ye Chong could see that the damaged mech had a broken pilot cabin. As they flew into outer space, the mech pilot's face immediately ashen, the result of cyanosis. His face, however, was traced with a smile, and the result was eerie. In the next moment, both mechs exploded into flames, engulfing both the owner of the eerie smile and the space pirate.

Ye Chong looked at the smiling face in a trance. He felt like he was hit at a vulnerable spot deep within him.

Under the glowing fire of the explosion, Ye Chong's expression was unreadable.

Ye Chong looked on desolately. Those civilians had fought so desperately, probably to protect the ones they love. He, on the other hand, did not even know who his parents were. His Papa was dead, and he was left all alone. No, there was still Mu and Shang, but did they need his protection? Ye Chong felt a certain bitterness rise within him.

The holographic screen flickered in a multitude of colours, reflecting off Ye Chong's face. The changing colors, however, only made him look even more desolate. In the next moment, however, Ye Chong quickly returned to his usual indifferent manner.

Shang kept his silence throughout.

"Shang, let's go." Ye Chong spoke up plainly. The battle was too complicated, like a full scale war. Unless he revealed the full extent of Coxcomb's firepower, he could not tip the scales of the battle by

himself. Besides, Ye Chong could find no reason to interfere. On the trash planet, once a hunter overcome its prey, it would never leave the prey's offspring alone too. Such was the law of nature.

While Ye Chong was not afraid of these space pirates, it would still be a terrible annoyance if they took him on. At the very minimum, his travel would be delayed, and there were too many things that he needed to do right now. He must hurry to planet Rainbow, which had a mystery related to his Papa. What Ye Chong needed to do right now was to solve this mystery.

Nevertheless, just because Ye Chong ignored them did not mean that the space pirates would return the favor. A few space pirate mechs flew towards him, blasting their laser guns against Coxcomb. In truth, the leader of the space pirates did not want to be involved with this massive starship. However, his underlings were now all excited from their raid, and were no longer under his control.

After a few rounds of laser beams, the Coxcomb was left with only a few tiny dents. Their level of attack was only barely worth mentioning against Coxcomb's thick hull armor. However, Ye Chong raised his brows at their attack. He was not in a good mood since he came here, and now that the other party came to provoke, Ye Chong could not help the anger slowly rising within him.

It was not in his nature to not retaliate. In truth, if not for the entirely different level of power of the Three Forces, Ye Chong had never stopped himself from retaliating against any attack. Besides, these mechs here were just like clowns to him. With mechs and mech pilots of this level, they were a piece of cake to him.

Ye Chong deployed Puppet and slipped into the pilot cabin of the clown mech.

"Ye, leave some for me!" Shang shouted as he waved Recursion at him.

When Coxcomb's hatch opened, the few space pirate mechs

retreated a little. To them, a massive starship like this often came with more than a hundred mechs for security. At the moment, these space pirates could still think rationally. If the mech that came out were too many to handle, they would simply retreat. After all, they still had plenty of backup behind them.

After a long while, a single mech flew out, and a thin, ugly one at that. The pirates gave a good look at the mech, and could not help but laugh out loud, momentarily forgetting about the battlefield.

Ye Chong was used to the opponent's reaction when they saw Puppet. In any case, that was his intention. Even if his enemy was weaker, why not make it easier by lowering their guard?

Ye Chong looked at the enemy. The scene was only too familiar, almost an exact copy of what happened when he rescued the team of five earlier. Just when Ye Chong was about to move, a thin blue beam shot across the sky, and Ye Chong watched as one of the mechs before him exploded into a fireball.

Ye Chong started. Before he could recover, another two blue beams shot past him, and the remaining two mechs went into flames as well.

The three mechs exploded into fragments, raining onto Puppet.

"Hehe." Shang's laughter came from Puppet's photon processor. Ye Chong looked back helplessly towards the ship, and saw Shang behind the hatch, waving Recursion frantically as though he knew Ye Chong would be watching. Those three blue beams must be his work. Shang must have aimed for the enemy's energy cells to make them explode. Given that he hit on target for all three beams, Shang must be as good a shot as Mu. Ye Chong was impressed. If Ye Chong found that Mu's three shots had hit at the exact same location, perhaps he would be even more impressed.

The leader of the space pirates saw everything, and his face twisted. "M*therf*cker, who asked them to go near that ship? You, you and you, pass it down, no one is cleared to go near that ship, or

I'll make them regret it." The pirate leader jabbed his finger at his underlings in panic. He was deeply terrified on the inside. "F*ck, so there's a super sniper mech pilot with the ship, no wonder they sent out only one mech. That super sniper pilot was terrifying, to hit the energy cells with all three shots! And it's weird, that sniper rifle, it fires blue beams, and the sniper didn't even pause between shots. F*ck, is that really a sniper rifle?"

He knew exactly how terrifying a sniper mech pilot equipped with such a dangerous sniper rifle could be!

Sniping was a relatively unpopular specialty for mech pilots, but also a powerful skill. Sniper mech pilots were the top of the cream in shooting skills, and unlike other mech pilots, they focused their training only in shooting, and were less competent in close combat. They usually used sniper rifles as their main weapons, and aimed for single killshots. These mech pilots were particular in choosing their weapons. In general, they were all very powerful characters, and with their almost flawless shooting skills, even a normal heat ray gun would be formidable in their hands. Any enemy caught in their sights could perish at any time.

However, even though sniper mech pilots were powerful, it was difficult to earn the title due to the high level of skills that came with it. Sniper mech pilots were coveted by all forces and organizations.

To think that there would be one here! The pirate leader cursed again at the idiocy of those three fools, not acknowledging how he had implicitly allowed them to go near the massive starship earlier.

Like the pirate leader, Fid was shocked, but was immediately overjoyed. If the crew of this starship could help him, then they might stand a chance. If the ship had a capable sniper mech pilot, even if the other mechs had only average battle capacity, they would still amount to a formidable force. He did not know that the entire Zika class starship had only one passenger.

A sniper mech pilot could change the course of the battle!

"Quick, send a distress signal to the ship. Let them know we have only civilians here, and hope that they would assist us!" Fid commanded in haste. Given the situation, every minute was precious.

Chapter 224: Kings of Close and Long Range Combat I

Ye Chong was returning to his ship. Shang's three shots were clean and fruitful, leaving him no chance to do anything at all. Just then, Ye Chong heard Shang through the comms channel, "Ye, they just sent a distress signal over, what do you think?" Shang sounded eager, obviously still excited from his shots earlier.

Ye Chong replied flatly, "Leave them, we have things to do."

"Awh ..." Shang groaned like a child denied of his favourite toy. "Ah!" Shang suddenly gasped.

"What? Shang." Ye Chong was surprised.

Shang spoke quickly, "Ye, look at this."

Through Puppet's photon processor, Ye Chong saw a holographic image of one of the starships side, and through the windows, he could see the horrified expressions of the people inside. Ye Chong suddenly widened his eyes!

He stared for a full three seconds. Even though the image only caught the side profile of that person, Ye Chong was sure he recognized him.

It was Grandpa Qian! Leaning against the window was the face of an old man, one that Ye Chong was very familiar with. Ye Chong had spent a long time with Grandpa Qian, and was certain that he did not see it wrong.

Ye Chong quickly recovered himself and asked hurriedly, "Shang, which starship is this?" Without further hesitation, he maneuvered his mech and Puppet turned back towards the battlefield, flying towards the chaos. No matter what, since Grandpa Qian was here, he would not just watch from the side. His time on Blue Ocean with Grandpa Qian was the happiest he had ever since Ye Chong left the trash planet. Besides, Grandpa Qian

had loved him. Ye Chong could not just stand by and watch Grandpa Qian die in the battlefield.

As Puppet accelerated to its maximum speed, Ye Chong could only regret not using Han Jia in the first place. Puppet glided through the darkness of empty space like a king.

Another thin but straight blue beam shot past Ye Chong from behind, flashing into oblivion. Ye Chong caught where the beam was aiming for. Beyond him was a starship with a few mechs surrounding its hatch, and the blue beam had hit one of the pirate's mechs nearest to the hatch. If he looked closely, the mech's smooth pilot cabin was now punctured with a hole that could fit a finger. The mech immediately lost control.

Ye Chong understood that Shang was showing him the way. He adjusted his course and headed towards the starship.

Just then, a few more of the blue beams shot past him, barely touching Puppet. The rest of the mechs lost control just as suddenly. Ye Chong realized that Shang had killed the pilots in those mechs. He had no time to dwell further on the fact that the beams from Recursive could be so powerful. He could only wish that Puppet could move faster.

More blue beams came - the pirate mechs surrounding the starship had all become Shang's targets. The mechs were hit at almost the same location and lost control in a similar way, though none of them exploded. To prevent explosions, Shang had chosen to shoot at the pirate mech's pilot cabin. In truth, the finger-thick blue beam was too small compared to a ten-meter tall mech, much less to outer space. Many of the mech pilots fighting against the pirates realized in surprise that their enemies had suddenly lost control for no apparent reason.

Nonetheless, the pirate leader was watching the mysterious sniper mech pilot, and by now, he was frozen in shock! Heavens, why did such a terrifying sniper appear out of nowhere? Will the

f*cker kill them all?

Ye Chong approached the starship without incident, since all the enemies nearby were destroyed by Shang. He was worried about Grandpa Qian, and headed straight towards the hatch. Even in this situation, Ye Chong kept his cool.

Puppet's small and lithe figure now came into play. The mech entered the starship as silent and deft as a cat. Ye Chong silently flew and came to a junction in the corridors. He now realized what was happening. At the end of the corridor was a mech desperately defending its position. The mech was a classic battle mech, but truly deplorable in terms of the pilot's skills. Given the circumstances, however, the desperation forced him to fight like never before, and the space pirate mechs around him could only huddle around in the corridor, unable to fire their laser guns for fear of exploding the starship, killing everyone in it, including themselves.

The narrow corridor could only fit one mech, and so the three pirate mechs found themselves trapped, unable to move forwards or backwards. Only the first mech could fight directly with the combat mech. All three mechs had their backs facing Ye Chong. They must have never imagined that their comrades outside would all be finished off.

Puppet still moved silently. Even in the narrow corridor, Puppet still moved easily.

Ye Chong felt as calm as an iron lizard hunting its prey.

In a single step, Puppet closed in on the last mech closest to him. The mech seemed to feel something and made to turn to inspect, but Puppet moved!

Puppet's left hand clasped tightly on the mech's neck as the parrying spear sprang out from the right arm like a poisonous serpent, snaking itself into the mech. Ye Chong also chose to attack the pilot's cabin. With black gold mixed into its material, the spear

performed excellently, puncturing right through the mech. Ye Chong could even hear the sound of bone breaking as the spear went through, and the horrifying shriek from the pitiful mech pilot.

At the same time, Puppet kicked the mech's knees hard with its right leg, and the other mech gave. Puppet's left hand pushed at the same time, and the mech bent down further.

The attack had shocked the other two mechs in front. The one confronting the battle mech panicked, while the defending battle mech was greatly encouraged by this unexpected backup.

The second mech turned around to stop the ambusher.

Ye Chong did not give the mech a chance. The battleground was advantageous for Ye Chong's battle mech. Puppet's left hand pushed downwards and pressed forward with its legs, pulling out the parrying spear in the same move as it jumped across the mech it had dealt with. Now, Ye Chong was twenty meters away from the second mech.

Puppet's agile response made the second mech even more alarmed.

Before Puppet landed from his jump to clear the first mech, it kicked against the walls of the corridor and directed itself straight towards the second mech like a cannonball.

Puppet came fiercely fast. The narrow corridor and its fast approach was daunting. As Puppet flew past the second mech, its right hand aimed the parrying spear straight at the enemy's throat and drew blood. However, the attack left Puppet flying off course. Just when it was about to hit the corridor's wall, Puppet braced itself with another kick against the wall, and did not look back at the helpless second mech.

The first mech Ye Chong attacked was now only crashing to the ground with a crackle.

The throat was a mech's most vulnerable part, where its photon circuits were all centered about. Once the throat was damaged, the mech was also useless.

The last remaining mech found itself surrounded back and front, and was terrified. Ye Chong acted without mercy, burying the parrying spear deep into the mech's body. However, Ye Chong still attacked carefully, avoiding an explosion.

Puppet's entire attack was executed smoothly, and its swift footwork made its movements unpredictable. Besides, it was able to use some strange moves, even in the narrow corridor. These unusual moves could only be done by a very competent mech pilot.

The battle mech before Ye Chong may not exactly be a battle expert, but Ye Chong saw that he could avoid attacks quite deftly, which was why the mech survived the pirate mechs for so long, stalling them here.

Swish! The alloy door behind the battle mech opened, and the battle mech signalled for Ye Chong to enter. That was his intention anyway, and so Ye Chong entered together with the other mech. Once inside, the alloy door sealed shut. The airlock was then pressurized, and the room was quickly filled with air. As the air pressure stabilized, another alloy door opened up, where a large group of people rushed out and surrounded the battle mech, cheering with joy.

Ye Chong quickly found Grandpa Qian amidst the crowd. He looked just as before, only wearier and older. The two people beside him, however, surprised Ye Chong. Supporting Grandpa Qian was Rui Su, while the person on the other side of Grandpa Qian was Rui Bing in her white training garb, looking steadfast. Beside Rui Bing was a beautiful middle aged woman, who looked a lot like Rui Bing and Rui Su. Ye Chong guessed that she must be their mother.

As for why they were with Grandpa Qian, that was his main

question.

The pilot cabin of the battle mech opened and out came a young man, to which everyone cheered even louder. It was this young man's incredible feat that kept them safe until backup arrived, or they would all had been captured by the space pirates.

The young man was none other than Wei Yuan, whom Ye Chong was acquainted with. Wei Yuan was excited from his success, and ran to Rui Bing as he yelled, "Sister Bing, Sister Bing, I did it, hah!" Rui Bing's icy face thawed slightly with joy.

Rui Su continued from the side, "Little Yuan, you don't know how sorry you looked like just now, tsk tsk, jumping up and down like that, it's horrendous." Wei Yuan's expression soured as he said, "Sister Su, don't mock me like that." His face made everyone laugh out loud. Grandpa Qian laughed heartily, and even Rui Bing gave a little smile.

Ye Chong felt at a loss. Why were they all people he knew?

Rui Bing looked towards the clown-like mech. Its performance was seen by everyone here through the holographic camera in the corridor. Out of all of them, perhaps only Wei Yuan and herself realize the power of this clown mech's three attacks.

Rui Bing was certain that the clown mech's pilot must be an expert in combat, and excellent in mech piloting. This advanced level of piloting was nothing like what Wei Yuan boasted himself to have.

Ye Chong watched Grandpa Qian laughing, and was reminded of his earlier days with Grandpa Qian. He felt a little dazed.

"Hey, Master, why don't you come out?" Wei Yuan cupped his hands like an amplifier and shouted. Wei Yuan was absolutely impressed with this master. The pilot must be an expert in mech combat. Wei Yuan believed that, in terms of close range combat, there were probably not many who could defeat this person

outside of his idol and Sister Bing's future husband, YC. In his mind, Ye Chong was already destined to marry Sister Bing.

Everyone looked expectantly at the pilot cabin of the clown mech, hoping to see the hero that had saved them all.

Wei Yuan's voice broke Ye Chong reverie. He looked downwards at Grandpa Qian and Rui Bing, and for some reason decided then not to go out.

"Shang, think you can find out why this fleet is here?" Ye Chong communicated to Shang.

"On it!" Shang began working as he replied.

Fid could only stare in stupefaction at the massive starship, and the half-concealed mech from its one opened hatch. He was feeling a little out of depth, and was shocked beyond words. In fact, it was not just him - everyone in the starship's bridge was gaping widely, staring blankly at the holographic screen with the semi-concealed mech.

Was this even humanly possible?

That was the million zuan question in everyone's hearts.

Right from the beginning, the impossibly powerful sniper mech pilot had never stopped. He shot like a tireless machine. The fatal blue beams were not entirely noticeable, but everyone on the bridge had already decided that those were beams of death. Every beam signaled the loss of a life, and every mech was destroyed in the exact same manner - exploding into a ball of flames.

This accuracy did not seem to decrease. From the beginning, the mech pilot had never missed a shot.

A clear electronic beep startled them all out of their trance. Fid's second rushed to the command console and issues some controls. Suddenly, he gasped, "Squad Captain, look at this, they're asking where we're heading, and the nature of this starship fleet."

Fid gestured with a wave and said, "Tell them! Our only hope is their assistance!" Fid could only bet everything on this starship.

"Ye, they're a fleet heading towards Csebesini Galaxy, the fleet is mostly made up of civilians," Shang quickly relayed the information to Ye Chong.

"Csebesini Galaxy ..." Ye Chong finally understood that they were escaping from the war. The only thing he could not understand now was how Grandpa Qian would be with Rui Bing and company.

The Rui family had only begun connecting with Grandpa Qian not long after Ye Chong left Blue Ocean. Rui Bing was always trying to find out where Ye Chong went, and Rui Su was also regretful of what she had done, as she tried her best to help her sister. Ye Chong had stayed with Grandpa Qian when was with Blue Ocean Academy, and most everyone knew that he was very close with Grandpa Qian.

Perhaps it was a matter of loving anything to do with Ye Chong, or perhaps it was for some other reason, but Rui Bing began to visit Grandpa Qian frequently. Grandpa Qian also grew fond of the young lady with a cold exterior but a warm heart. Rui Bing would sometimes help Grandpa Qian to make noodles, while asking him about matters related to Ye Chong. Of course Grandpa Qian understood her feelings, and would answer all her questions happily. Rui Su would sometimes go with her sister, and her smart way around things was something Grandpa Qian especially appreciated. Rui Su, on the other hand, came to act like an obedient daughter whenever she was with Grandpa Qian, something Rui Bing could not understand. As time passed, the two girls grew closer with Grandpa Qian.

The current migration to Csebesini was not something Grandpa Qian wanted. To him, he was an old man, and would not mind dying at his home. Travelling at his age to such a faraway place, where the road was rumored to be quite dangerous, and was too much of a hassle. In the end, however, he gave in to the insistence

of Rui Bing and her mother, together with Rui Su and Wei Yuan.

Ye Chong knew nothing of this, and did not intend to pry. To him, it was fine as long as Grandpa Qian was happy.

Ye Chong could not help but took a glance at the woman in white training garb too, her intimidating charisma standing out amidst the crowd.

"Ah! Isn't that our Bing Bing? Heavens! Ye, it's the season of peach blossoms for you [1]! To meet our beloved Bing Bing here ... What? Peach blossom? You don't know what's peach blossom? That's probably because you're not reading that chip Lunatic Guan gave you right, isn't there an illustration for plants or something in there ..." Shang observed as he shot effortlessly on.

"Master, come out! Everyone's waiting for you!" Wei Yuan was still shouting from below. Everyone was curious - why was the hero still not coming out?

Just when everyone was confused, the clown mech pointed outside. The crowd realized then that the battle outside was not yet finished while they were celebrating inside. The euphoria from surviving vanished in an instant. If they lost the battle outside, their fates would remain unchanged.

Wei Yuan no longer smiled, but looked focused. He quickly went to his mech. In fact, Ye Chong believed that Wei Yuan's help would not tip the balance of the battle. If the young man died, however, Grandpa Qian and the lady in white training garb would probably grieve.

With that thought in mind, Ye Chong rummaged in his bag and produced a dimension keystone. He opened the pilot cabin slightly and threw it towards Wei Yuan.

Rui Bing was watching him closely, and was therefore quick to move a good three meters across to Wei Yuan, catching the keystone with only two fingers. It was a ring-shaped dimension

keystone. Wei Yuan recovered himself and took the dimension keystone from Rui Bing as he shouted happily towards the clown mech, "Master, is this for me?"

The clown mech nodded and turned to leave.

"Shang, we might have to fight." Ye Chong said plainly. Puppet was still not out of the starship yet.

"Hahaha, Ye, I knew it, hehe, must be because you saw our beloved Bing Bing'er. Tsk tsk, heroes never could stand against beautiful women, even a wild animal like you, Ye could not avoid this fate ..." Shang blabbered on.

Ye Chong could only cringe inside. He could remain calm in battle, but never could stand against Shang's words.

When Ye Chong flew out of the starship, he immediately saw the word "Coxcomb" that plastered on the front of his starship. Ye Chong nearly lost control of Puppet. Shang had actually took the starship to him.

Both the pirate leader and Squad Captain Fid were confounded by the name of the ship. How could such a massive starship be named so crudely as Coxcomb? Everyone was feeling a little sorry for the Zika class starship.

Shang had, until then, destroyed dozens of mechs. Since the blue beam from Recursion was very tiny and almost unnoticeable in space, it went mostly undetected, and many space pirates found their comrades suddenly exploding into flames.

The empty space of darkness was lit up like a dazzling banquet.

Squad Captain Fid's side could finally breathe under the enemy's pressure. The surviving mech pilots were enough to at least evenly match the space pirates.

The pirate leader, on the other hand, was furious. Victory was almost certain for him, until this horrendously capable sniper mech pilot came into the scene. He knew that if he did not do

anything, the situation would turn against him soon. The sniper mech pilot was good, never resting between shots, as if he did not need time to aim. In the short time span since the beginning, he had lost dozens of mechs on his side. If things continued like this, he would never be able to recover.

"Blade, take Black team with you and finish off that b*stard," the pirate leader could no longer do nothing about it.

Chapter 225: Kings of Close and Long Range Combat II

Blade was the crew's most menacing fellow. He was bold and fearless in the face of death. The pirate crew had always relied on him when the situation turned sour. He was the leader's right hand man.

Blade never liked talking. He nodded grimly at the leader's command and turned to leave. Black team was the pirate leader's security retinue, and the strongest force in the entire crew. These men were all expert mech pilots, and were numbered to be 300. They were all well trained and skilled in combat. The pirate leader decided to use his trump card, signalling the climax of this battle.

A large swarm of mechs headed towards the massive starship. Shang noticed them as soon as they were deployed. He realized their plans immediately.

"Hehe, Ye, I'll leave this place to you," Shang said and went back into Coxcomb.

"Alright," Ye Chong replied plainly.

The pirate leader saw the sniper mech pilot returning into the starship, and felt much relieved. As expected, the enemy had squirmed. However, before he could fully appreciate the moment, he saw the sniper came back out from his holographic screen.

Was the enemy really so confident? The pirate leader did not what else they had in their sleeves.

Shang gave an evil laugh, but the electronic sound was a little creepy to hear. Not that there was anyone around to hear it. Shang's battle lust was now fully unleashed. If the pirate leader saw what Shang had by his side now, he would probably faint.

Right next to Shang was a stack of energy cells that went up to half the mech's height. This was what he went to retrieve. While

Recursion was a powerful weapon, it consumed energy very quickly. It was a pity that the teardrop mineralite could not be used yet, else Recursion could continue shooting for a very long time.

Even so, these energy cells here should be enough.

Ye Chong wandered around the starship fleet. The starship which held Grandpa Qian was Shang's main objective, and the pirates around the ship were all dealt with. Ye Chong had to sweep out further to find the other pirates.

Ye Chong moved across the battlefield carefully. He dared to be hasty. Puppet had exchanged its defense for better agility, so its armor was not as reliable. If an enemy hit him with a laser beam, he would not fare very well. Death by carelessness was not part of his plan.

This was a huge and chaotic hunting range, and Ye Chong was like a cunning and graceful hunter.

Ye Chong saw two mechs ahead of him, shooting at each other as they took evasive measures. It was easy to differentiate between the mechs of the pirates and the hired mech squads. The pirates' mechs were colourful and came in all kinds of models, some even made up of parts that did not work well together. The mech squad's mechs look more uniform, and were models that could be found in the market.

Ye Chong could tell at once the next step those two mechs would take. His rich experience in battle allowed him to do so.

Puppet moved like an assassin, quietly hiding behind the starship. It kept its body close to the hull, less than five meters away from the tip of the starship.

Puppet waited intently, like a lizard waiting to make its killer strike.

Ye Chong counted the seconds as the pirate's mech slowly

emerged above the ship. Inside the pilot cabin, Ye Chong moved abruptly, his hands flying across the controls in a blur of a shadow. It was a pity that no one was watching him.

Puppet was like a lizard clinging closely to the starship's armor, but now it sprang up, drawing an arch in space. In the next moment, Puppet crashed into the pirate's mech. At this close distance, Ye Chong could see all the details of the other party's mech.

Puppet was lying in ambush behind the starship, and its silent attack came as a surprise, coming from below. As Puppet's clown-like face appeared to the pirate in the mech, the mech pilot was momentarily stunned.

The parrying spear from Puppet's right arm launched, driving straight through the other mech's pilot cabin. Out of all of Puppet's installed parts, the spear was the most valuable. The spear, mixed in with black gold, was perfectly suited for penetrating its victims.

Puppet pushed against the now useless mech in its hands and swept back into darkness.

The Oak Leaves mech pilot who was just now engaged with the pirate mech only saw a slim figure bouncing off his opponent and disappearing into thin air. After long moments of waiting in anticipation, he finally noticed that the pirate's mech was already damaged, the pilot dead inside. He thought back to the figure that appeared and disappeared so quickly into the darkness.

Ye Chong felt like he was back on the trash planet, and the starships around were the mountains of trash. Ye Chong maneuvered Puppet around the starships, hiding in their shadows, the way he flew Winnie between the trash mountains.

Ye Chong's attacks were all meant to kill. He did not squander any movements, and would only choose the most opportune moment to deliver the fatal blow from the darkness to his unaware

enemy. His pair of parrying spears had pierced through the armor of numerous mechs, and Ye Chong did not give mercy to any of the pirates inside them. This was war, and mercy was a luxury. Ye Chong had no habit of practicing mercy.

In truth, if not for Grandpa Qian, Ye Chong would never have gotten involved. Since he had decided to step in now, though, he would do his best and leave no loose ends, giving no chance to his enemy.

Burning in Ye Chong's cold eyes was the flame of battle.

Puppet jumped from starship to starship without slowing down. Ye Chong was already immersed in the mood for battle, a state of mind meshed from calmness and excitement. Ye Chong's hands no longer moved quickly for his own sake, but moved more easily, slowing down or speeding up according to need. He would stay motionless for one moment, but move so quickly it was hard to see his hands in the next. This transition between moving very quickly and not moving at all was strange, but Ye Chong did not notice it. In fact, he felt it come naturally. The mech was like an extension of his body, and his every thought was translated into the mech's movements.

Under Ye Chong's maneuvering, Puppet moved erratically in sudden jerks of speed, or rising and falling abruptly. It flew unpredictably like a ghost, or as deftly as a monkey.

The skill of battle could only be honed on the battleground.

Shang was also in the state of mind for combat. In truth, Mu had always taken charge in battles, but even Mu had never did it more than a few times. According to Mu, only when Ye had truly matured that he would be allowed to maneuver them. Hence, unless the situation was desperate, Mu would not reveal himself directly. Shang was born even earlier than Mu, and no one would believe that he was not actually experienced in battle.

What a joke! Was a mech made of so much rare metal used just

for decoration? Besides, the injury on Mu and Shang's left arm was the perfect evidence of their history. If Shang was a conscious being, then he must have some inborn fighting instinct. However, the topic of consciousness in PSI's was a little weird.

Now, Shang looked cold and emotionless, Recursion held steadily in his right hand. If he was performing at the mech pilot's NR Training Center, he would earn full marks for this.

Despite his usual blabbering, Shang was now the perfect killing machine.

To Blade and his three-hundred strong advanced mech squad, it was a disaster of devastating proportions. The blue beam came as a harbinger of death, each shot answered by a loss of one of their mechs.

What terrifying accuracy! The sniper had never missed. Even someone as capable as Blade could not help but feel hopeless. Could there really be such a crazy sniper mech pilot? With his long experience walking the edges between life and death, Blade knew that no matter how strong a person was, anyone, even himself, would commit a mistake at some point. His experience had validated this belief of his time and again, but this half-concealed sniper mech pilot had yet committed any fault.

The constant explosions of mechs illuminated the swarm of mechs. An observer could easily mistook that the mechs were facing the full force of another mech squad. In truth, their enemy was only a single person.

Long distance sniping, the most difficult part of shooting training, was now performed flawlessly by this unknown mech pilot. It was a divine performance. The further the target, the harder it was to shoot accurately. At their current distance, any slight error in shooting angle would be greatly amplified. No sniper mech pilot could maintain a perfect shooting record at long distances.

There was once a famous sniper mech pilot who said, "In long distance sniping, you need luck more than half the time." This was the perfect testimony on how difficult long distance sniping could be.

What vexed Blade now was how very lucky his enemy was at the moment.

On normal days, the time it would take for him to reach the Zika class starship would be but the blink of an eye; now, however, it felt like forever. His comrades were thinning out. Blade knew that retreat was not possible at this point. Even if they turned back, they would still be within range of the enemy, and it would only make it easier for the enemy to finish them off.

Blade was not the only who understood their situation. Black team's members were all veterans of battle, who came to the same conclusion. They braced themselves and charged forward. Once the sniper was within their attack range, they would be able to fire back.

Without the need for orders, they flew in a scattered formation, and deployed evasive measures. While these evasive measures could not prevent the death of the sniper's targets, it was obvious that the frequency at which the blue beam appeared had decreased.

Shang continued to shoot steadily, unperturbed.

Ye Chong could not remember how many times he had attacked, but the number of mech pilots he had rescued from battle was increasing. For the first time, the mech pilots in the two mech squads outnumbered the pirates, if but slightly.

In the control room of Red Lion's mech squad captain, everyone gaped at the holographic screen. After a long moment, the beautiful redhead sitting on the captain's seat muttered, "Heavens, is that guy human?" This beautiful redhead was Red Lion's squad captain, Claudia. With her fiery red hair, she was one of the very

few female mech pilots who attained the title of advanced mech pilot.

At twenty five, Claudia was at the prime of her beauty. Her mature and hot personality was attractive, and made her the center of attention anywhere she went. Her snow white skin, aquiline nose and sapphire eyes were assets that she took pride in.

She was also a good leader. Red Lion mech squad was only a group of twenty when she took over, and now it had expanded into a massive five-hundred strong mech squad.

Now, Claudia was wearing a dazed expression, tinged with awe born out of ignorance. However, this beautiful sight was lost to the people around her, for everyone was as shocked as she was now. The skinny mech figure on the holographic screen did not seem remotely strong or valiant, but perhaps a little comedic, its colorful exterior making it look much like a clown. However, this clown-like mech had evoked a chilling sense of foreboding in their hearts.

This was a master of ambush, and an expert in mech combat and mech maneuvering!

The clown mech's colorful face was silly looking, but no one in the control room was laughing. To them, the silly face was a cover for whatever chilling fear it could evoke. They can all imagine the mech pilot sitting in the pilot cabin watching those pirate mechs with arrogant eyes!

Claudia was also thoroughly convinced of the clown mech's pilot's strength. The pilot was a master in all respects, be it in strategizing, timing, combat skills and mech maneuvering. What surprised Claudia the most was the pilot's calm steadiness - the clown mech had dealt with dozens of pirate mechs, but he still continued to fight as systematically as when he had first started.

Such an inhuman calmness! Claudia could almost believe that this mech pilot was a top class assassin from a professional killer's guild.

He did not like flying, but preferred to leap, or move on all fours. He kept to the darkness, and stuck to ambushing, using the rarely preferred parrying spear. All these signs showed that the mech pilot was someone rather peculiar.

She could not help but steal another glance at the starship named Coxcomb. She could not understand how an ill-named starship could have such an expert.

Was this an unconventional master of battle?

Coxcomb also had another equally intimidating sniper mech pilot, and he was now single-handedly and successfully dealing with over 300 mechs! Claudia looked at the other holographic screen. The swarm of mechs was now left with only a few dozen of them, engaged in shooting with the sniper. She felt reluctant to continue watching. These were all advanced mech pilot veterans, and a formidable power when they were deployed. Nonetheless, they were now undeniably being broken apart by a single mech with a weird energy gun.

What was Coxcomb's story? What was its owner like? What did its two masters of combat look like? How were they related to the owner of Coxcomb?

This was all very curious!

If Shang were to find out that a beautiful woman was calling him a master of combat, perhaps he might lose a bit of his current fighting composure. Of course, that was another story.

Fortunately, Claudia understood her situation. These two masters of combat could never be hers to command. She would not try to pull them in to her mech squad.

The battle was nearing its end, as the pirates mech numbers dwindled. Ye Chong had scoured the entire fleet of starships, and killed all of the pirate mechs who wished to board the starships.

"Shang, how's your side?" Ye Chong asked.

"Hehe, Ye, this is too much fun! Sigh, too bad there's not enough of them going, if they only have a hundred more mechs." Shang's excited reply made Ye Chong relax. "Shang must be in a really good mood," thought Ye Chong. In fact, Shang was not only that, but nearly mad from exhilaration. If not for the diminishing number of energy cells by his side, Shang would even try shooting with the recursive particle cannon shots.

A huge rock of ore was flying slowly past Ye Chong. Ye Chong looked towards the pirate ships far away, tightly protected, and was struck with a crazy idea. Immediately, Puppet leapt to the ore and grabbed onto it like an insect, securing itself on one side of the ore. Then, the mech fired its engines at full blast, and the ore drew an arch in space with Puppet and Ye Chong on it, headed towards the pirate ships.

Claudia took everything in and could not help but gasped, "What is he thinking?"

Chapter 226: Kings of Close and Long Range Combat III

In truth, almost everyone was watching Coxcomb's terrifying sniper mech pilot. This battle between one and 300 would be a story as important to other sniper mech pilots as their course material. Besides, if all 300 of those mechs were advanced level mechs, then no one would object calling the sniper mech pilot as one of the best in the field.

Such a rare battle of historical significance was underway, and no one would want to miss it! Everyone was glued to the holographic screen, counting down the number of mechs left on the pirates side. Besides, the result of this battle would determine their own fates, thus raising the stakes even more. Everyone was astonished to find the pirates wielding such a strong force, but also thankful that they had met this impossibly strong sniper mech pilot.

Be it the pirates or the civilians, this fight would determine whether they live or die.

Ye Chong's movements were only noticed by a single starship, and that was Claudia's Lunar Rose. They had been watching the clown mech from the start, and were awed by its performance. They believed that the clown mech's unexpected movement must be some unrevealed plan.

Puppet clung onto the ore, still. This ore was bringing Ye Chong quickly towards the pirate ships observing from afar.

Roar! The crowd in Lunar Rose's control room erupted into an outburst. They now understood the clown mech's intention. Was he suicidal? This was the question that arose in everyone's mind; only Claudia was watching the mech with esteem.

Ye Chong sat in Puppet's pilot cabin calmly, without a ripple in his emotions.

"Ye, be careful." Shang spoke out of concern. He approved Ye Chong's plan, and had even cooperated by slowing down his shooting, not killing off the pirate mechs as quick as he could to produce the illusion of an equal chance of winning in his fight. This was to draw attention from the enemy and to stall for time.

Ye Chong felt warm inside, but kept his face neutral as he replied plainly, "I know."

Ye Chong had used this strategy before. When he met with the Red Beard's Owl pirate crew, he had relied on this strategy to kill the pirate's leader. That was also when he met Bai Linan. This ambush strategy required three conditions to be satisfied. Firstly, the ambusher must be extremely capable of fighting by himself. Secondly, the enemy should have a weak defensive line. Lastly, the ambusher must be able to reach the starship of the enemy's leader unnoticed.

In truth, if Ye Chong was flying Han Jia, he would be more confident of his chances. However, given the chaotic situation, he knew that there would be people hidden amongst the crowd, looking for him. Han Jia would be difficult to explain away, and Ye Chong did not want to attract attention.

Even with Puppet, he was confident enough to complete the task, or retreat successfully should he fail. He could do it with Sand Scorpio before, and Puppet was even better than Sand Scorpio, so his chances would be higher now. Besides, Ye Chong believed that the seemingly tight security was just an empty show. If they had another mech squad, Ye Chong believed that they would have been sent in when the battle first begun, securing an early victory.

Now, they could only watch their mechs killed off, one by one without being able to do anything. This meant that they had no more remaining force.

As for the starships surrounding the battlefield, Ye Chong chose to ignore them. If these were warships, they might pose as a threat,

but they were clearly unarmed. Without any mechs to protect them, they were helpless.

Ye Chong's action may seem hasty, but it was born out of detailed considerations.

In outer space, asteroids of all sorts could be found almost anywhere. This particular one slowly making its way towards their ships was anything but noteworthy. Just as the asteroid was about to hit the starship, it eerily traced an arc across the space. If anyone on the pirate ships saw this, they would immediately be alarmed. However, it went by unnoticed, since everyone was absorbed in battle. The mighty sniper mech pilot's shooting frequency had dropped for some reason, and this gave them hope. They were watching their holographic screen with unblinking eyes.

With his previous experience, Ye Chong was able to quickly identify which of the ships belonged to the pirate leader.

Ye Chong left the ore and landed softly onto a shaded corner of the starship. Puppet was already wielding its two parrying spears in its hand. With one leg as the pivot, Ye Chong drew a circle in the air with its parrying spears. Metal scraps flew outwards. Puppet's parrying spears were tough, and was the only way Ye Chong could think of that could breach the starship's hull armor. However, this starship's armor was thicker than that of ordinary starships, and Ye Chong could not breach the ship even after a few rounds of attacks.

One of the pirates inside inclined his head to listen, and asked one of his comrades beside him, "Huh, I think I heard something just now, didja hear it?"

The other pirate laughed derisively at him and said, "Hah, gotcha heart in your mouth, ain't ya? Hehe, sonny, let me tell you, I've seen situations like this dozens of times in my life, and it always turned out alright in the end! Keep your heart where it should be,

now."

Ye Chong suddenly felt a round plate of armor loosening. Just then, the round plate was flung out due to air pressure. Puppet was now moving as deftly as a human being. It pushed its right hand off the round plate and jumped to the side. Just as the round plate left the starship, Puppet inclined itself and evaded the round plate as it swished past the mech and flew straight out into space.

Ye Chong ignored the air gushing outwards from the hole and crawled inside.

If none of the space pirates noticed this, they would be unworthy of their titles. The alarm blared in the starship, and it was chaos inside.

Ye Chong ran towards the control room without hesitation. In truth, he did not know exactly where it was, but he had seen more than a few starships, and could make a rough guess. After deciding on the location, Ye Chong chose the most direct route. He broke through walls and doors, even tore through photon circuits when he met them. Ye Chong destroyed everything in his path, and advanced astonishingly quickly. He encountered some mechs along the way, but they were efficiently dealt with. As for the pirates without their mechs running away from him, Ye Chong chose to ignore them.

The starship was actually quite useless by now. The ship was depressurizing quickly, and the air was so thin now that breathing was almost impossible. Most of the main photon circuits were destroyed by Ye Chong, and the entire starship could no longer function. All the lights were out, and the starship looked like a dead vessel. Only the control room was still illuminated, since it had its own independent support systems.

However, this made it a clear destination for Ye Chong. Ye Chong adjusted his course and ran towards the control room. Ye Chong took full advantage of the darkness and the complicated narrow

environment. The mechs which stood in his way were all disabled with Ye Chong's ingenious plots.

Not sticking to any pattern of attack - that was Ye Chong's way of fighting. In fact, Ye Chong was mostly using the basic moves that Mu made him train the hardest. He moved simply and quickly, making use of the environment. That was where Puppet's eerie, unpredictable moves derived their power from.

Walls, ceilings, alloy doors all served as launching spots for Puppet. The mech also used many unusual moves, reproductions of combat skills that Ye Chong could conjure in his mind. These were all moves that were impossible without Ye Chong's excellent mech maneuvering skills.

Puppet advanced so fast that many of the space pirates had no time to deploy their own mechs. As Ye Chong breached the walls of the starship, they all died from suffocation as air escaped into outer space.

The surrounding defense starships seemed to received their distress signal at the same time, and quickly approached the starship. Even in this dangerous situation, the defense starships could only deploy about 40 odd mechs to assist. This confirmed Ye Chong's theory that the pirates did not have additional battle forces.

Ye Chong's mind was now as clear as ice. He did not hesitate as he broke through the wall of the control room with his parrying spears. Air gushed out from within, and Puppet braced through the airflow and entered the control room, agile as a monkey.

Inside, five mechs surrounded a red colored mech in the center. They all waited in trepidation, not knowing how the enemy had entered their starship, or how many of them were here. For now, they could only wait to defend themselves and wait for backup. They believed that as long they could delay the other party for a moment, about three minutes, or maybe two, then their backup

would arrive.

Seeing the five mechs before him, Ye Chong did not dare to be careless. The five mechs were all advanced mechs, top class mechs that could be bought from the market. These five mechs seemed to be highly skilled, judging from their positions and posture. If it were one against one or two, Ye Chong would not be concerned. Now, however, it was a matter of one against five. Besides, the enemy seemed ready to put their lives on the line. This was a difficult situation for him.

If Shang were here, he could just finish off everyone one of them with one cannon blast. However, the thought was not helpful to Ye Chong.

He had not much time left. Ye Chong dared not hesitate further. Puppet launched forwards, making a bend, and reached one of the mechs. Speed was the mech's strength, and its movement gave everyone a shock. The control room might look spacious, but it was definitely too small for a mech.

In this small space, no one would dare to speed up their mechs so fast, for fear of hitting the walls. Besides, that abrupt change in direction seemed impossible for any observer. At this speed, with such an abrupt change in direction, one would think that the mech pilot would be left with broken limbs.

However, this was exactly what was happening before their eyes.

The five of them were horrified. Two of the five were skilled in close combat, but this degree of mech maneuvering left all five of them with ashened faces. Given the circumstances, long range mechs could not unleash their full potential. Weak energy guns could do nothing to the opponent's mech, but more powerful energy guns might explode the entire starship. Moreover, the other party moved too quickly and unpredictably, and it was impossible to lock on target.

Just when everyone was still caught up in surprise, the clown

mech suddenly made a right-angled lateral change in direction. With this, all the mech pilots were once again astonished, even though they were all highly skilled themselves. That move was practically against the laws of inertia!

Ye Chong was now facing a close range mech, with its typical weapon combination of a shield and a laser sword. The clown mech made a go at him. While the mech pilot inside was afraid, he still maintained his calm and charged forward instead of retreating, making a small left step forward while raising his shield, and striking down vertically with his right hand's laser sword. This series of movements was executed smoothly. The defense offered was strong, and Ye Chong could not find a way to break through. Ye Chong was secretly impressed that the pirate crew could have someone so strong with them.

Even so, the attack was not a threat to Ye Chong. Puppet inclined its body and avoided the sword smoothly. Its right hand pushed against the shield as it leaped across to deliver a right kick towards the other mech's face. If it hit, the other party's mech would probably be decapitated, and the mech would become useless.

The clown mech's unusual reaction was also a surprise to the other party. Fortunately, he was experienced enough to respond accordingly, stepping wide and lowering himself while angling his upper body backwards, thus avoiding the clown mech's attack.

Ye Chong still wore a calm expression, but his eyes flashed. Ye Chong knew that the moment had come!

On the controls, Ye Chong's hands were practically a blur. Only his wrists could be barely made out as a blurry shadow.

The other four mechs could only watch in anticipation. They were too close together, and had no space to attack. Besides, of these four mechs, three of them were not specialized in close range combat.

The clown mech then did something that none of them would

ever forget for the rest of their lives.

The clown mech suddenly reached out with its left hand, holding on to the lower part of the shield so strongly that the pirate mech was about to topple over, though the pilot quickly steadied himself. With his upper body still, he watched as the clown mech's left leg swept past his head.

Suddenly, the burden on the shield was gone, and the clown mech disappeared! This sudden turn of events had all the pirates looking around in a daze.

Just then, the pirate heard from his comms a surprised gasp, then a horrifying shriek! The shriek sounded very familiar, it was ... it was from his leader! In that moment, his mind blanked.

Behind him, the clown mech leaped high into the air at high speed, bouncing off the ceiling at an angle. When the pirates recovered from their surprise, the clown mech had already disappeared from the hole in the wall where it came from. At the same time, he heard a bang from behind, the sound of a mech falling to the ground.

He turned back and could not believe the sight of his leader's mech lying on the ground, with a huge hole in the pilot cabin. Inside was a bloody mess. While he could not see his leader, it was clear that no one could survive those injuries.

He still could not understand what had happened.

Later, he learned from his four comrades of what exactly happened, and it would haunt him for the rest of his life.

The clown mech held onto the lower part of his shield and pushed, using the momentum to sweep its left leg across his head, the whole mech doing a complete rotation in the air like a windmill. Just when its legs hit the ground, the clown mech suddenly rolled into itself and slipped under his shield before anyone could react. The clown mech was slender to begin with,

and executed a series of moves to make him widen his stance, thus allowing the clown mech to slip past between his legs. After that, the clown mech was directly in front of their leader. It shot upwards like a poisonous snake and finally took out its parrying spear, accurately plunging it through their leader.

When all four of them recovered their composure, the clown mech had already withdrew its spear and leapt off their leader's mech towards the ceiling, then bounced off again towards the exit!

Inside the icy cold mech, through the hole from the attack, the body of the pirate's leader was slowly losing its warmth. With that, the leader of this large pirate crew was killed by the clown mech despite their defensive measures.

From that moment on, word of the dark clown spread like wildfire throughout the pirates, and every pirate now knew of the existence of this clown-like mech that walked in darkness.

His mission accomplished, Ye Chong's next task was to quickly return to Coxcomb.

The clown mech's speed was now fully unleashed. Ye Chong flew directly towards Coxcomb quickly and without reserve. Behind him were 40 odd mechs in pursuit. Shang increased his firing frequency, and in just moments, the few mechs that managed to get close to Coxcomb were all destroyed. Just like that, with the spectators gasping in shock, 300 over mechs were annihilated!

The sudden appearance of the clown mech on the holographic screen caught everyone's attention.

Ye Chong proceeded to perform the art of evasive measures. As the 40 over mechs attacked with an array of shots, none of them hit Ye Chong. The eerie change in directions, confusing feints, and movements at all kinds of angles held the spectators in wonder. In the eyes of professionals, this clown mech had instantly become the most dangerous character around.

As Coxcomb drew near, the 40 odd mechs grew fearful of the sniper and began to retreat. Even so, Shang managed to take out three of them.

The survivors cheered jubilantly as the space pirates retreated, and joy from surviving permeated the entire fleet!

Chapter 227: Fleet

Currently there was one problem standing in Ye Chong's way. Based on the course planned by Fid the leader, both Ye Chong and Shang could confidently confirm that, there should be no less than 5 groups of pirates lurking on the way. A fleet filled with folks would be a feast for the pirates. The Oak Leaves and Red Lion could have been completely annihilated if Ye Chong and Shang had never joined the party.

Without the escort of the Coxcomb, the success rate of the fleet arriving at Csebesini would be no more than 10% in the end.

To be honest, Ye Chong did not really care about the survival of those mere strangers. According to Shang's comment, there seemed to be a kind of occupation called the "rangers" or the wandering "vigilantes" who turned out to be the very busybody taking care of life, maintaining justice for everyone in the world. "What's justice?" The elaboration was worthy of a classic eye-roll from Ye Chong, as Shang stated that there was also a rather lackluster and conspicuous concept called "Justice", which the artificial indulgence seemed to be very passionate about. "Okay, got it." And Ye Chong quickly retrieved the microphone from him.

Ye Chong - for some reason - did not wish to let Grandpa Qian to know who led the Coxcomb. Maybe because... well, I was more of a lone wolf eventually. Thought Ye Chong, a little dejected.

Ye Chong was a decisive person. He was not the kind to hesitate and there he was, making up his mind. A living person would always be far more important than a dead person. His papa would support his decision if he was still alive.

Alright then! Ye Chong and Shang began launching the project vigorously. First, Shang replanned a course to travel, where the distance was much longer but at least they would be able to avoid the areas frequented by the pirates. "This is preposterous! I can't

believe one could make such an unintelligent course!" Shang could not control but to reprimand this physically non-existent planner of the former course. Ye Chong on the other hand was running to and fro in the ship and withdrew every battery he could find in their storage. The gate where Shang made his sniping before was filled with a massive amount of batteries. Similarly, there were also placed numerous batteries at every corner where the cannons were. Given that a war were to happen, the Coxcomb would not be able to sustain itself for the energy consumption in long-term. So the tedious task of replacing batteries would be performed by Ye Chong the captain slave.

Both the leaders of the Oak Leaves and Red Lions, Fid and Claudia were on an exchange.

"So..." Initiated Claudia, "We are in a sticky situation now. If we do not call for more backups, we would be in deeper trouble as we travel on," she frowned as the remaining forces of both the squads were discouraged and worried after the fight.

Of course, she was not the only depressed one. Fid's face was tight the moment he realized the unexpected difficulty he and his squad had to overcome this time.

Apparently most of the people were unprepared for the war which came falling like a bomb.

Well, they were glad to be still able to sit together and have this exchange, after all that chaotic experience. Fid was silent, as he admitted his helplessness towards the situation. "Calling for more backups" were said easier than done. From where would they get the backup? What kind of backup? In the matter of days they would never form a proper crew and it would be more chaotic if the pirates took the chance to sneak in as one of those backups.

In the midst of hopelessness, his assistant ran into the room, all excited, "L...Leader, my lord, captain, I can't believe this. The Coxcomb had just sent us a plan, a new plan for the course!"

"Huh?" Both the leaders looked at each other, confused. "Take a look." The assistant then projected the new course on the hologram. A course - which they had never thought of - was drawn in clear lines over the galactic layout. And the destination of the course turned out to be Western Track, a residential planet in Csebesini galaxy.

The heck? Fid and Claudia looked at each other again, wondering in what Csebesini the owner of the Coxcomb was playing with his cards.

"Grrr... Ye, look, it's ourrrr Bing Bing! Tsk, tsk. Look at her legs, demm, long and gorgeous yet capable of delivering strong blows anytime. She could give me a blow anytime! Jajajaja... Ye, too bad you missed it. That split she made with her beautiful legs on the floor, it was beyond beauty! Man, my heart would sail off to the other dimension if I keep watching this..." Shang was growling in excitement, while on his duty to watch the entire fleet, where supposedly, his focus should mainly be on the spaceship with Grandpa Qian and the other mates. And there Shang was, blatantly abusing his rights being the watcher, as his mechanical eyes were bleeping over one angle of Rui Bing to another.

Ye Chong did not intend to feed the hungry indulgence as he was very much engaged in an important experiment. The fluid he collected from Twin Sisters was more corrosive than he thought. No wonder Lunatic Guan stated it being one of the 12 most corrosive plants on her microchip. A drop of the fluid could fall through a spaceship armor about 10 centimeters thick in the matter of a minute. It would spread vigorously too.

What Ye Chong must do for now, would be to culture a new sprout of Twin Sisters using the fluid, which was not a challenging task to do. Practically, a task like this was generally not challenging to even a second-year alchemy student.

The cultivation was a success. One might think it would be a little too much to cultivate a small sprout using such a luxurious lab, but

the facilities were able to speed up the growth period of Twin Sisters. Ye Chong eventually was able to harvest a few tens of Twin Sisters. Ye Chong spent the following days to study their behavior. Observation was one key task for any professional alchemist. Ye Chong even took into account of their frequency of secretion.

He looked at his inventory, as naturally he was figuring out a way to transform them into a kind of firepower. Being once a resident on the Trash Planet, fully utilizing resources was his very good habit. The fluid of Twin Sisters possessed a great potential with their corrosiveness. If one could utilize the fluid appropriately, it could be destructive.

It was the first time Ye Chong took an approach of an alchemist in his thinking while what he did was simply amplifying the corrosive effect of Twin Sisters. Being an alchemist, a novice alchemist he was, he could still figure out a few tricks to make it work.

He could, for example, continuously change the surrounding of Twin Sisters to encourage mutation. Then he would select few of the Twin Sisters closest to the standard. Alternatively, he could also use the fluid as a base to create a stronger corrosive reagent.

He proceeded with the second method, since the first method was too time-consuming for Ye Chong. Lunatic Guan fortunately also was an expert in formulating reagents. Those bone strengthening formula were also the outcome of her research.

Ye Chong did once think of using the Guan's automatic analysis mechanism... he could have found the perfect formula for the reagent by simply searching. But he never wanted to do so, plus Lunatic Guan had reminded him to not rely on the mechanism too much, that principle of his which encouraged him to rely himself rather than the others, was echoing in his head.

To reach the higher height, one must figure and explore. Ye Chong could have skipped this phase using the mechanism but he

would lose more than gain in long run.

He tried recalling the knowledge he had learned before, attempting to connect them to reach a certain set of formula.

"Jajajaja..." And Shang spent the next few days watching Rui Bing, jumping from one camera to another. The hobby of a voyeur was more than entertaining. The biggest regret of his was probably the lack of camera in the bathroom.

Ye Chong was investing all his time on research. He trusted Shang, that he would inform him at the very first moment if anything were to occur. Then Ye Chong could save his time from watching over Grandpa Qian the whole time. The plan however had received criticism from Shang, claiming that it was unsentimental.

The crews of the other ships outside were wondering the whole time, of why the Coxcomb did not seem to be leaving them despite not having an obligation to lead them. Was the owner of the Coxcomb really intended to escort the entire fleet? Everyone was appreciative over the mysterious Coxcomb for the contribution. They would probably be long slaughtered by the pirates if the Coxcomb was never there.

Fid and Claudia had comprehended the underlying motive of the new course, so they immediately responded by requesting their squads to change the course accordingly, while announcing them to the entire fleet.

The puzzlement for them was the lack of response from the Coxcomb every time they requested communication. No sound was coming from the communicator. After the course plan was sent, the Coxcomb had never proactively engaged in the transmission. He just sailed on quietly at the center of the fleet.

It would certainly be a pleasure for Shang to get the phone, since Claudia was also a beauty, even though she was far from Bing Bing the gorgeous. Claudia was, still, the uncommon polished jewel in

the cave, Shang would no doubt have the intention to spend the next potentially happiest 5 minutes in his life talking to her. "No. Watch and no more than that," Ye Chong strongly disagreed to his action. Shang in the end succumbed to the days of being a Peeping Tom.

Ye Chong's eyes set upon the bottle of reagent in its purplish glow. There was excitement in his expressionless eyes since that bottle of reagent was the very first craft he actually made with his alchemy expertise, namely "The Liquid of Shang". Its corrosiveness was deadlier than the Twin Sisters, where all the alloys in Ye Chong's possession were unable to withstand its melting effect, including the black gold.

"So Ye, may I ask why is there my name on this... thing?" Shang seemed curious.

"Oh. That has to do with its full name," his reply was calm.

"It has a full name? What is it? Could you tell me?" Shang was really interested.

"The Secretive Liquid of Shang," the answer was concise.

"Ye!! You are good!" Shang was grinding his mechanical gears, rolling back and fro, "I'll remember this!" His mechanical eyes rampaged in glaring blue.

Ye Chong was not free to entertain the thrashing indulgence and he felt that the name was very befitting to the reagent's function, although he found Shang's actual secretive liquid to be potentially far deadlier than the reagent.

Ye Chong seemed to be inborn with extreme sensitivity towards war and weaponry. The reagent did not come without a boom. The melting effect of "Liquid of Shang" was beyond his expectation, which gave Ye Chong a new weapon of fatality. So Ye Chong made use of his bone supplies to create a kind of shell to contain gases to envelope Liquid of Shang while installing an aiming program

which mimicked the double-edged shuriken, allowing it to accurately lock upon the foes. He also added miniature engines on the bomb to permit automatic redirection when necessary.

No doubt, a killing weapon had been born. A shell made out of bones would go undetected by the foes' system. Then there was the locking-on system, assisted by redirecting engines, making it the signature weapon for the assassins.

Shang complimented the creation while also seizing the naming opportunity, "The Beauty's Secretion" he called it, in a poetic manner.

And Ye Chong began the mass-production of the Beauty's Secretion the following days. In Shang's terms it would sound like this, "You have such a big ship yet you only have a handful of the Beauty's Secretion? What a joke it would be!" Ye Chong must agree that the Beauty's Secretion could very well be an effective threatening tool. If that was the case, indeed the supply was too low at the moment.

The heart-wrenching fact for Ye Chong was the painful realization that the qualities of the bones used for production had negligible effects on the overall capacity of the product. And he only had the best, few rare bones in his inventory. Such a waste to make them into shells, yet he lacked options. At most he could pick the few less-rare bones for production.

Shang even designed a launcher for the Beauty's Secretion. And Ye Chong, being half-dead from the production, got to crawl up from the ground to further modify the Coxcomb to accommodate the new launching channel. At least the modification was quite simple so it did not take much time.

Hundred Twenty... Hundred Twenty One...

Ye Chong was surprised when he counted the outcome of his production, for he actually had produced 260 Beauty's Secretions without noticing.

And they were very much close to Csebesini. Fid and Claudia were not expecting a smooth sail... They could not believe in three days they would be arriving at Csebesini. Throughout the journey, not even once they had encountered the pirates. "Very strange..." said Claudia, when she was body and soul ready for any wild encounter with the pirates the whole time.

Assuredly they would not know how news spread faster than a meteorite among the pirates. On the second day of that war, almost all men with their bandanas on were made aware of the existence of the Coxcomb, which did not only have a super sniper capable of mass-murder, but also a killer clown sneaking in the darkness. And the pirate leader, even under the dense protection, still was brutally murdered by the foe's parrying spear.

The disbanding of a crew was nothing new among the pirates but the story had taken a change when the crew involved was one of the few strongest one. The sailing pirates could not believe their ears when they heard of how the strong crew was eradicated by merely two men, including the leader who was killed right in front of everyone. It would be considered as the greatest insult for one crew's leader to be slaughtered by the others and surely the survivors would seek to avenge their leader someday. Nonetheless, none of the survivors even dared to think of avenging. Their eyes were colorless, their bodies were shaking the moment they told the very tale, of their close-shaves dealing with that clown killing horror and the deadly blue glow.

There was not a need to mess with such a figure! Every leader of the crews thought so, which was why no pirate ever showed up in the following days of the fleet's course. The little factions of pirates, too, were well-aware of their sizes and limits and would not even approach that fleet.

The escort was a success. Both Fid and Claudia were overjoyed despite not knowing the working behind this. And the names of their squads would be known by the people, they would ascend as

the few greatest squads out there. People would give their hymns over them while they would be handsomely rewarded. The expansion of the squads would be close.

And they were heading to the last space-jumping point on their course. They would arrive at Csebesini after performing space-warp there. When wars were haunting the other galaxies, Csebesini had transformed into a Neverland for the others. The government still owned the wholly right of the galaxy and was enforcing their security. People remained at peace and was never disturbed by the shrapnels.

The residents from the the galaxies had been moving into Csebesini one batch after another, which pressured the local government in return. The government demonstrated efforts in arranging residences for the immigrants however, which the immigrants greatly complimented. Csebesini, as the surge in the number of residents, commenced rapid developments.

Once we hit the point, we would make it! Fid's excitement glowed in the eyes of Claudia. Claudia's joy was lighting up the pupils of Fid.

"Report!"

Right when everyone was hopeful and excited, at the void nearby, there was one fleet of darkness.

"We had discovered a large fleet of privateers."

"Mhm, looks like we have a group of uninvited guests. Pass down the order, the sixth and seventh ships would eliminate all privateers. No survivor. Repeat, no survivor. The remaining warships shall maintain their course. We must arrive by the next warp point within 5 hours." An emotionless voice rang. A pause was made, "Send Thorn along."

"Yes sir!"

The last two warships of the dark fleet were redirected towards

the large ship at the opposite.

Shang discovered the fleet almost immediately after. Standing before the hologram, even a calm man like Ye Chong felt a sudden cramp over his head the moment he saw the fleet. It was a group of 7 warships. The black glowing body obviously told Ye Chong that those were the ships from the Black Coves.

A fleet! Gosh! Ye Chong saw the strongest force incoming! To Ye Chong's senses, a warship would indicate a large warring unit. And all the units he had encountered thus far, be it from the MPA or the Sanctuary, had always been one unit at one time, never once he saw ... a fleet of them, of seven units...

The other ships in his fleet were not reacting towards the shocking discovery however. And Ye Chong then realized that their detection system could not detect the Black Coves' specialized war crafts.

Shang was a quicker planner than Ye Chong, as he passed the news to Fid. And every spaceship in the group was commanded to travel at full speed to hit the warp point as soon as possible.

The Coxcomb sluggishly flew away from the fleet and went to confront the two warships. The Coxcomb was slow to make a runaway. It would be more practical to confront the foes instead. At least that would give better chances of Grandpa Qian's survival.

Ye Chong was not being really sentimental over this, rather it was the outcome of his calculation, the optimum route to pick.

Ye Chong inhaled deeply to gain his inner peace. He was sure that he would not be able to make it out within the grasp of 7 warships, but at least he could make sure that there would be one or two warships joining his grave.

And this, shall be the first war of the Coxcomb!

Chapter 228: First War of the Coxcomb

The armor of the warship had that particular metallic glow which convinced Ye Chong the identity of the voyage made out of black gold. Unlike the warship of MPA which was all graceful and sophisticated, the Black Covers made their ship in the toughest, and most efficient way they could possibly imagine. Those tubes of the cannons bold as their soul, those rampant amount of gates across the ride where the mechs seemed to be swarming out from soon... there were even thorns over the body, giving the warship an appearance of a porcupine. Ye Chong was foreseeing the also decent capability of warship on performing a close-ranged attack while firing off cannons.

The two approaching warships from the Black Coves were rather surprised seeing the fleet accelerating out of sudden. Are we busted? No way. Privateers should not have the technology to detect us beforehand.

Within the boundless space and the broadening milky way, the size of the Coxcomb was pronounced as he travelled in slothful tranquility.

The two warships approached very quickly after they discovered that the over-sized spaceship was heading towards them. It was no shocker, a Zika-graded spaceship was merely a sailing ornament, one with only the outside. Privateers were still privately owned ships after all, compared to the warships, it would feel like an arm against a firearm. The remaining 5 ships from the Black Coves were highly confident of the capabilities of 2 leaving warships, so they sailed off to the warping point.

It was a relief when Ye Chong saw the other mates of the Black Coves forfeited the fight. They were going to be in contact soon. A one-on-two would be still better than a one-on-seven. The stress would be quite different.

The figure displaying their distance was ticking on the screen, getting lower each time.

Ye Chong deployed Han Jia, the issue of being busted was no longer his concern. The survivability was something more important. He did not hop into the cabin immediately, as he knew Han Jia could wield only the fists and the legs, going off now when both parties remained distant would be pointless.

Well, then, we will do something first. Ye Chong did not intend to hold back. Shang would probably think the same, as nasty-minded as he was.

Beep. The board covering the 52 electromagnetic cannons was lifted. The tubes were glowing in threatening darkness towards the approaching dark force. The sudden change of the Coxcomb startled the incoming foes.

ZZzzzzzzzt!! Energy started being charged at the muzzles! Due to angle issues, only 33 electromagnetic cannons were pointing within the proximity of two of the foes. The accumulating electromagnetism was glaring in the black void. Some said it was brighter than the nova, the morning star. The naked eyes seemed to be deceived as they saw a constellation of a tiny fish formed by the 32 glows in the dark.

The hologram on the projector was showing the otherwise. The densely conglomerated glows were a major horror to the crew. The pale blue glow flooding the muzzle was a brutal warning.

"Battle station! All warring units take off now!" The leaders made a prompt command in their throaty shriek. The gates were opened one after another, as the units swarmed out of their nests. Like hornets they took off smoothly despite the emergency, the outcome of their systematic training was justifiable. The cannons of both warships also started glowing.

Beep. Beep beep. Beep beep Beep beep. Beep beep Beep beep Beep beep.

Within twinkling of eyes, the screen was overflowed by countless red spots.

A massive energy-based weaponry like the electromagnetic cannons would require a moment of charging-up, or the unit would explode as the abrupt surge of energy jammed the system.

The electromagnetic cannons of the Coxcomb were charging, as about hundred of Beauty's Secretion slid into the space quietly. Both Ye Chong and Shang knew, the key to the war might not be the energy-based weaponry they had built, rather it could be the deadly corrosion in the dark. Although they were unsure of the capabilities of Beauty's Secretion as it lacked actual experience in wars, its participation would have direct influence to the outcome of the war. And that launch Shang made had already consumed about half of the secretion in their storage.

The two warships were performing their evasion. It might appear to be ridiculous to Ye Chong as he would never believe a warship being capable of performing an evasion this agile, but it just happened before his eyes. The coxcomb literally looked like a retarded sloth before the two Black Coves' crafts. And that was when Ye Chong made up his mind, swearing to strive on giving the Coxcomb another overhaul, if they ever made it out alive that is. The Coxcomb was nothing but a walking bullseye. Ye Chong prayed to have eliminated the foes before the Coxcomb got hit.

Then, considering the possibility of the foes requesting immediate backups from the other 5 warships after this, Ye Chong would be obliged to perform a space-jump before the backups arrived. The acceleration before the actual space-warp would put them under the greatest risk, as any form of interruption could lead to a horrible outcome - they could jump to another dimension, while also having the possibility to warp to the deserted area beyond the 5 major galaxies. Any imaginable outcome would be mortal. So, that last straw to the crumbling, it must be avoided at any cost.

The flowing blue glow at the muzzles were getting brighter. Zoom! 33 beams of light in pale blue rifted the void. The two warships could have looked all deceitful in their evasion, but they were no match for the master sniper called Shang.

The electromagnetism oozed over the darkest space formed a shining bridge between the Coxcomb and the foes.

The beams were obviously most effective penetrating the armor of the warship. Penetration itself was nothing to be afraid of, since unlike the spaceships or the mechs, most warships were programmed to perform a rather facilitated self-repair mechanism immediately. The armor was not the issue, the energy units, however... Assuming the beam landed on the batteries or the charging pipes of the foes, the collision of energy would initiate an explosion which would cause casualty as well as the destruction of the warship itself.

The first wave of attack was fully aimed at one of the inching warship. The thumb rule to fight a one-on-two was always to knock down one partner with maximum force before the other.

The outcome, was grand. Under the attack of charged energy blast, the warship was crippled, probably damaged beyond repair. The Black Coves might have fought the mightier foe like the MPA, but the MPA only had about 20 electromagnetic cannons on their corvettes, unlike the Coxcomb, where Shang launched 32 cannons at once. The power would be beyond overwhelming, especially with the aid of the tubes made out of black gold which further enhanced the effect. Given that they were facing the MPA instead today, their warship could have taken at least two to three waves of high density energy blast like this. Too bad, they were not.

Zzzzzt Zzzzzzt! Boom. The explosion happened one after another. The beam probably had in fact landed on their batteries. The consecutive explosion made Ye Chong unable to imagine the remnants of the ship, he could end up seeing nothing in the void. The crew on that warship? The explosion was a horror itself, the

men on that warship would have ended up the specks among the asteroids. No way they could have survived that.

And that was the first war between warships Ye Chong had witnessed, where death could be determined in one moment. Contrary to the fights between mechs, the body of a warship was too hefty to make real agility, so the first wave of firing would have determined the outcome.

Ye Chong tumbled into the cabin of Han Jia. He got to put on something, he was still a human and he would be diving into the void.

The Coxcomb took a drastic turn as the 19 electromagnetic cannons at the other side were about to finish charging.

Oh no.

Ye Chong's eyes were then blinded by the light. He felt his eyes almost burning. Boom! The explosion created a quake within the ship, carrying inertia, flipping Hanjia violently. Ye Chong could feel himself tumbling uncontrollably. Wham! Han Jia was slammed upon the wall. Luckily he was able to get inside Han Jia and gained protection from the built-in liquid buffering system, or he would have transformed into a splat of flesh on the wall.

The Coxcomb was hit! The Coxcomb was hit! It was fortunate that the Coxcomb was making a turn, that the light beams slightly missed as they slid through the Coxcomb at minimum contact. They carried on zooming beyond the Coxcomb, going through the fleet accelerating behind.

Ye Chong by then had learned the fact that any individual, in spite of the mighty strength they might wield, would be minuscule in a massive war like this. No one could guarantee he or she could be the last one standing in the war.

The armor of the Coxcomb was papery compared to the warships. At least the cannons of the foes were not as great as the

electromagnetic cannons on the Coxcomb or the slightest touch like that just now would have torn the Coxcomb apart.

Everything happened according to Ye Chong's imagination. The Coxcomb was too sluggish to make the necessary movements at occasions. Shang had tried his best to predict the timing and perform the evasion beforehand, yet they were struck by most of the incoming beams. The yellowish white glow sliced through the dark void from the Black Coves, leaving openings on the fragile body of the Coxcomb. And one beam had contacted a charging cannon at one spot, which caused the explosion that flipped Han Jia like a whirlwind.

Well, the Coxcomb was alright, except for the fleet. A beam could easily penetrate two to three spaceships and the fleet was traveling at their closest, like the group of ducklings with their mother. No way the beam could have missed.

Explosion, a few explosion illuminated the space. The queueing fleet was then disorderly. They might be able to face the pirates' strike with courage, but towards the brutality of the firing, they had surrendered with the loss of hope. They could only watch the explosion happening with their eyes enlarging, while their leaders struggled to speed up, striving to crawl to that warping point and leave this dangerous war field. The situation had already gone beyond control, while the leading spaceships of the fleet had already performed their space jumps and scurried from the scene safely.

The spaceships of different colors and shapes crashed into each other. Ye Chong could no longer distinguish the one which Grandpa Qian boarded within that one panicked glance. He prayed, that they would be the luckier ones than the others and not part of the explosion.

The Coxcomb was not the real warship in the end, one blow and the body of the Coxcomb was full of openings. The saving grace was that the Coxcomb was not damaged at its main component so

it was still under Shang's control.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! The spaceship was crawling slower than a tortoise. One more blow and we could smash it! We would not have to call for backups if we knew it was made out of jellies!" stated the living warship of the Black Coves proudly.

"Right." The even-tempered cannoneer was finding it strange as well, "What a weird warship. Both slow and frail. The armor was their fatality. Tsk, although I must admit that they have great firepower. Warship Number 7 took the blow and bloody hell, it became goner, scaring the crap out of me. Freaking hell. I think the MPA's cannons are no as good!"

"What a pity Number 7 was. At least the beam was not at our boat, or we would have joined the milky way now. Now that you have mentioned it, I do find that electromagnetism firing similar to the MPA's."

"Indeed. But this is much bigger I must say," the experienced one from their team added.

"So which side does this warship belong? And they actually have better technology than the MPA?"

"Who knows... as much as you can see, there are always a hermit hidden somewhere in this world."

Despite the comments, the Coxcomb was being tormented in actuality, as the foe clearly demonstrated a more experienced warship-piloting than Shang. Moreover, the body of the Coxcomb was huge, the movement was slow. Utilizing those weaknesses, they launched their attacks in tiny waves to seize the control of the Coxcomb.

The leader of the ship seemingly had yet to realize how foolish his command was, for he could have destroyed the entire boat if he ordered his men to make a one-time fire instead.

Both parties were unable to do anything to each other.

The beams continuously showered upon the Coxcomb, but the Coxcomb managed to make necessary turning.

One nice flip by the Coxcomb.

The men were greeted by the 19 charged electromagnetic cannons from the other side, the living glow was a discoloring horror to the crew.

"Evade!!!" Roared the leader, "Evade!!!" His voice was wavering, his eyes were soulless.

Zzzzzzzzt!

Of course, they did not make it. It was too late for them to make an evasion, as 19 blue beams landed right upon their ship. It was obviously not their day, as one beam actually gave a gentle touch at their battery.

"Fuc-"

The war field was once again blinded by the explosion. The black gold armor was torn helplessly into debris, being scattered over the corners of the space.

A fireworks, bloomed like a brilliant flower.

Ye Chong was relieved. It was surely a mental trial for him to bear with the helplessness in a battle that he could not be directly involved with. He hated the feeling of not able to take the control of his fate.

"Ye, your final blow!" Shang's voice was expressionless as it lost its usual joking tone, sounded bloodthirsty and inhumane.

?

I wonder... if Shang was like this in the past? That was the strange thought appearing in Ye Chong's head.

"Okay." He took a deep breath and grabbed the inner focus. Probably he had been in many hand-to-hand combats, he realized that he could get into the status fairly quick, since in the past, he

would have needed to take a few more cycles of aspiration in order to get the sense.

To be honest, the war between warships had imprinted in his head, being all straightforward and direct, black and white, dead or alive. And there he was, once being worried that he would be short of batteries as the battle went on and on. The fight between warships was merely a matter of a few turns. The additional batteries, the energy was not that important and could be said as even a kind of unnecessary burden since it made the ship more likely to explode on beam contacts. But, similarly, the foes, the Black Coves seemed to be inexperienced as well, which eventually gave Ye Chong and Shang a chance to survive.

And finally, Ye Chong was ready for his next move. The mech-combats, the battle known as the bread and butter of his tale, they were exciting.

The screen projected over hundreds of red spots, which were so horrifying to Ye Chong in the past, that he might just press the "Eject" button and blast away instead. But now, with Coxcomb and Shang, he believed, he could see the next breaking dawn.

And then he realized, the benefits of having a warship for a mech.

Han Jia sank into the space silently. There was no need to open the gate. The openings torn by the beams were already the gates themselves. Ye Chong flew out from one of them. The things were floating around, as the air ventilation had been disrupted, the oxygen had leaked, forming various vacuum areas on the ship.

Being a skeleton mech itself, Han Jia sure was amazing at its speed and stealthiness. Those were the trick to every victory.

The destruction of two war units were enraging to the remaining Black Covers who departed from their ships just now. "We shall avenge!" They already lost their mates, and a way home to rest their transports. They no longer had the turn back option. And

when one, being unable to turn back, would have a stronger, more irrational bravery.

The dark mechs accelerated, their momentum intensified, as they charged towards that hefty looking warship! They were highly experienced and they knew the fragility of the armor of the Coxcomb. Their attacks shall not be stopped! As soon as they approached their foe, they would retrieve victory. The electromagnetic cannons might be a threat to the ship, but not enough as a threat to the mobile mechs.

The warship remained immobile, while the half-devastated body seemed to give off an unbeatable sense.

Don't tell me... there was not even one pilot inside such a big ship...

The pilots were confused and suddenly a crash was felt. Something small hit them?

Should be one of the specks from the explosion... One pilot thought, since the screen did not project anything, the detection system did not go wailing.

"Assassination. Careful. Photon Mode, now!" A deep voice of a male rang inside his helmet. Goosebumps crawled over his shaking hands... Wasn't that Lord Thorn?

Assassination? A skip on his heart beat, as he moved his hands over the control panel to make a change... Honk! Beep! The alarm wailed inside the mech.

It kept wailing. And he was wondering why. But there was something on the shell of his mech, a pool of purplish fluid engulfing the surface, in the hideous sizzles one could imagine.

The glowing shell of Cosmic Flare became distorted, melted like a splat of mud. "The Liquid of Shang", Ye Chong's latest invention, a liquid that nothing could stop, even the black gold alloys.

Sssssssss...ssssssssS... The thin armor eventually could not

withstand the pressure in the cabin. Boom. The armor ruptured, forming a dense opening like the hornet's nest. The air squeezed out of the pores and was pulling the diameters larger and larger.

Cough, cough... The pilot realized he was having some breathing difficulties...

Huh?! And he saw the giant opening, his eyes were huge, filled with disbelief. He frantically reached over the panel, he was trying to speak, yet the pressure squeezed his eyeballs, blood overflowed his expression.

And that... was how he used to look.

Chapter 229: That One Moment of Stare

The situation had gone too chaotic. Everyone on the spaceship was having their eyes tightly stuck upon the screen, with fright in them. The situation had taken a strange turnabout. The Coxcomb, from the beginning, had been traveling with them, as if a personal bodyguard heroically staying by their side, being the appreciated honor among the crew members. Well, anyone on the crew would have appreciated its participation in the fleet. The Coxcomb was sailing at the side wings of the spaceship, and the sailors, the staff, all of them crowded upon the window to have a proper look at their hero.

And that was when everyone thought they would be reaching Csebesini safely, the Coxcomb left abruptly, away from the side wings of their ship. Almost immediately after, they were shouted upon by Fid the leader to make it to the warping point at the quickest speed possible. The leader, who received the command, as well as the remaining crew had assumed the pirates had returned. His experience had illustrated a series of impeccable commands which eventually allowed them to be in quite a better status in the war.

But the confusion lingered, as everyone's eyes were almost popping out seeing the Coxcomb being the only ship on the screen, they once thought it could be a false alarm, there was no pirate in sight, till the moment the Coxcomb launched countless streams of blue beams to the darkness, explosion occurred. The void was exploding? The void was exploding indeed. Did the pirates have invisible technology? What was that stream of blue beams?

Wei Yuan screamed, "What are you waiting for!" He reacted quickly, "Change to Photon Mode!"

Apparently the anti-detection system - despite being effective against the most advanced hologram detection system - could be ineffective against the most traditional Photon Mode of the

visualization system.

The crew then switched their visuals to Photon Mode. To their horror, Coxcombs the gentle whale who escorted them kindly the whole time, turned out to be a warship, armed with countless dark frightening muzzles, all pointed towards the incoming dark mechs. The sudden emergence of a warship was worrying, the sudden devastation of the other warship was nauseating.

Warship - the tool which defined the war itself, that reminded humanity the fear itself - was there, laying bare in front of them. The pirates seemed to be a triviality now the moment the warship came into comparison.

The leader of the spaceship hurriedly performed his acceleration, since it was a known fact that an unarmed spaceship was directly vulnerable in front of a warship. Only speed could save them if they could make it to the warping point. All leaders from the other spaceships in the fleet held the same opinion, as the queue was in disarray. Then the pilot squads came into action to restore the order. And at that current ship where people crowded their windows, they were glad they were in luck, for they were quite ahead of the queue, they would be fleeing from the war field in a couple of minutes.

The passengers squeezed before the photon projection. They hurraed the moment the Coxcomb finished the other warship, as they breathed in a relief, delighted and salvaged, believing that the Coxcomb would be the one holding victory in the end. There were dense flocks of mechs but rumor said there was one super sniper on the craft that could finish 300 advanced models quickly.

"Elderlies and ladies please enter the safe house immediately. I repeat, elderlies and ladies, please enter the safe house immediately. The remaining passengers please stay calm and take care of your own safety. We would be performing space-warping shortly. Please be prepared." The elderlies and women were sent the the safe house in the ship, remaining the others still watching

the next action on the projection.

They could feel the inertia pulling them behind, the spaceship was accelerating, which signified them the space-warping was happening. Well, space jump was not something challenging for spaceships to perform, however, if they were interrupted, things could go a little nasty. Compared to two years before, as science and technology developed rapidly, the space-warping procedure for passengers today was of negligible discomfort. Most adults could not even feel anything much, other than the acceleration itself.

Zzt Zztt...

The visuals on the projection were wavering. The momentum intensified, the projection was getting more and more noises over the time, till at one point people could no longer distinguish the happening on the projection. They only saw a silhouette flying out from the Coxcomb, "Feels like a mech?" They believed.

Zzzzt!

"Ah!" One brief frame of the projection was very clear then nothing was there.

There were two voices exclaiming.

"Performing space-jump." The passengers were truly relieved by then. As soon as they completed the procedure, they would be away from all these chaos and devastation. Of course, before every space-jump, one must have performed a very precise calculation or the crew might never make it to their designated location. If the coordination was never given in the beginning, no one would dare to perform a space-jump this suddenly. Even if they were piloting a warship, the law of physics itself remained enforced for them.

It felt like a dream for the passengers, so unreal and mystifying, feeling so long yet it only lasted for a brief second. That depicted the sensation one had during space-warping, which was

mesmerizing to most people.

They felt their bodies lighter for one pull. Then the projection regained its clarity, as if they had exited from a lucid dream.

Rui Bing's face was stupefied, while Wei Yuan remained in a disbelieved expression. Yes, the two exclamations were made by them.

"Wh-What happened... Yuan?" Asked Rui Su to Wei Yuan, she did hear her beloved sister making the similar squeak, which was peculiar for she knew her sister's undisturbed nature. Well, she would not directly inquire her sister, since it was not easy to dig out anything from her thoughts. But Wei Yuan made the exclamation too, so he should know something.

Wei Yuan took a glance at Rui Bing, who was pondering with her head lowered, "It seemed like..." Whispered Wei Yuan by Rui Su's ears, "That... the mech seemed to be ... well, the brother-in-law of Sister Bing...I saw it before..." It was already a common sense for the Ruis to know the relationship between Rui Bing and Ye Chong. Whenever the great guy was mentioned, Wei Yuan loved to address him as the "brother-in-law", while Rui Su would call him "my future brother-in-law". The nicknames were rather gimmicky sometimes but Madam Rui was helpless on her daughter's marital relationship, knowing her daughter's personality, her daughter would execute whatever she had decided.

"Ah!" Rui Su screamed then she quickly covered her mouth. Her expressive eyes were telling skepticism. A moment of silence, and her sister remained stoned, "Yuan, you sure?" she whispered into Wei Yuan's ears, she was unconvinced.

"Hmph, no way I would get it wrong. My brother-in-law saved me with that mech, how could I have mistaken it?" angered Wei Yuan, as his wholehearted statement was being suspected by Rui Su.

Rui Bing's head was all upon the floor. A hint of sadness rose in

her heart for some reason. Was it... the greatest distance between us...? Or was it the silent most farewell? She was dumbfounded.

"Heh... my future brother-in-law is great in fact, for he knows how to protect us," Rui Su's voice rang by her ears.

"No way, how would brother-in-law know our whereabouts? Probably he just happened to be there and well, being a hero, he did so-"

"Shhhhhh!" Interrupted Rui Su, all disdainful, "Well, being a hero? What do you think your brother-in-law was? He was the cruel and cold kind from the beginning. Hmph, if there was not anything here worthy of his protection, how would he have done it? Stop joking!" stated Rui Su, based on her past experience dealing with this indifferent beast named Ye Chong.

"Don't insult my brother-in-law!" rampaged Wei Yuan. "What do you say?" shouted Rui Su. And they began quarreling.

Rui Bing's soulless eyes suddenly lighted up a warm glow. Was he there... for me? The Coxcomb had always been flying at the side wings like a royal knight in escort... It does feel like...

Rui Bing who lacked the experience of such situation was of course mesmerized by this feeling, like a young girl she was.

But then her worries upon Ye Chong's safety overtook her strange infatuation.

But what could I do? Rui Bing was quiet. And there the couple was, passing by the shoulders, touched yet unspoken again, when in the century, the decade would they mean again?

"But..." She tried to speak, but the words choked her. Her eyes were filled with bewildered fear and then were replaced by faith and optimism.

Rui Bing recovered her indifference, as she made the leap, right onto the center of the quarrel, and lifted the two fighting animals, dragged to the resting room where Grandpa Qian and Madam Rui

stayed.

"Sister Bing! It was Sister Su who..." Wei Yuan felt embarrassed.

"Bing Bing, don't listen to that Yuan. You know your sister, don't you? Sigh, my good little Bing Bing, would you spare your sister and put her down..." The strange gazes from the other passengers were more than pressuring to Rui Su despite her shameless nature.

The happening on the fleet was not something Ye Chong had leisure to deal with, as his eyes were all focused upon the flock of mechs before him.

About 20 dark mechs left in the field, waving their lingering aggression being the war units being all short of arms and legs from the effect of the Liquid of Shang. But they reacted quickly as they disengaged their limbs before the liquid expanded.

One could see the success of the Beauty's Secretion being the tool for assassination.

Thorn the lord of the Black Coves was more than angry, as there was such terrible casualty under his lead, the first incident to taint his perfect records. Never once he would expected the foe would wield such diabolical weapon while being able to avoid detection.

Ye Chong's glare carried on... and he distinguished one really different mech among the uniform mechs. And that was the mech who burst the incoming Beauty's Secretion with a single sting on his short alloy spear. Judging by his skill, the foe should be no novice.

That was not it. What was giving Ye Chong a loud thump in his heart was the mech.

It was the very first time he came across such model among the Black Covers.

Chapter 230: Thorn

The mech was the same humanoid model in dark metallic glow, of a balanced proportion coated with thorns which rose tidily of different lengths, in a threatening appearance all over its body, from head, shoulders, elbows to even the thighs. Although the spikes were different in lengths, all of them were perfectly sharp. And Ye Chong could not help but notice the fact that the fists were not plain dark like the Black Covers' usual units, rather, those were of a dim gold.

A Black Coves model painted in a color other than black itself? The addition was more than alarming to Ye Chong.

"Warning, Ye. This should be from the heart of the Black Coves, the real war machinery units, the high ranked model. The name of this model should be 'Thorn', if my information was not wrong that is. Mhm, so, be careful, the real warring pilot from the Black Coves would be exactly the real deal itself. Jajaja, well, compared to you that is. If I was the one standing in your place, those were just starters for me. Hah! Ye, may you have an enjoyable fight," the distorted mechanical laughed then rang inside Ye Chong's head. And Ye Chong almost had the urge to strangle that artificial indulgence with the arms of Han Jia.

Certainly, under Photon Mode visualization, Han Jia was no longer undetected. It was a miracle though, for the mech to be detected only after being this close to the Black Covers. Most of the survivors under the attack of the Beauty's Secretion were gasping in slight fear.

"Leave this guy to me," stated Thorn. "The rest of you will take the warship."

"Yes sir!" The remaining mechs blasted towards the sluggish warship.

Thorn, took a look at the strange mech before him, and was a

little shocked, as he realized this was the skeleton mech his heads had been searching for and he could confidently confirm that he was not wrong on his judgement. The fact was, technically no pilot who had undergone systematic training from the Black Coves would fail to recognize the skeleton mech being what the authority desired. And Thorn was the elite from the inside, he was more than well-informed on it.

Skeleton mech had always been something from the myth. Its design approach had been long raised by people, which however sadly nothing new had ever been discovered other than the words of mouth. And there Thorn was, having a clear sight on an actual skeleton mech hovering before him. The Black Coves research unit had been striving to at least grab the gist of its formation, even though the outcome had always been demotivating.

According to the news he had heard, in the 5 major galaxies, the current skeleton mech artisan the humanity could ever have would be the pilot sitting right inside it right now. And Thorn remembered there were also several commands going on in regards of the skeleton pilot himself... What a complicated individual... Thorn thought.

Whoever he was, the skeleton artisan pilot and the skeleton mech itself would be his first priority!

Coincidentally, Ye Chong who remained in the silence before storm was also taking a good look at his foe. Thorn, the warring unit gave a strong resemblance to a porcupine, which one could say to be "thorny" to handle sometimes. Fortunately Han Jia was pretty armed, Ye Chong could not imagine which part of Thorn to strike if he were barehanded.

!? What?

The dark humanoid vanished. Ye Chong was astonished by the vanishment of the foe!

That speed! Ye Chong flinched!

Han Jia twisted its body and took a peculiar turn. Panicked, it shifted to the position where the foe was standing formerly.

Klink! Klank! Klink!

There were a few streams of cold light flashing at where Ye Chong stood before. Ye Chong shuddered, as seeing the foe attempted to raid where he was before. He was really glad he moved his mech away before the rapid slashes happened. The foe was fast, very fast, probably as fast as Han Jia. It could be a close race if they were to have a competition. Mach 8 to 9 was actually this horrifying... now Ye Chong could understand how the foes he faced usually felt when he moved in Han Jia.

And Thorn, menacingly was excited. As expected from a skeleton mech, you never failed surprise me... Complimented Thorn in his mind, as contrary to his belief, he discovered the speed of Han Jia being slightly faster than his. My Thorn is known as the fastest among the core units in the Black Coves. And never once I would see such capability from a mech. No wonder the authority have been wanting the skeleton mech so much.

Towards the momentum of Han Jia, Thorn was not afraid, not even the slightest bit. The capability of a mech was merely an aspect, one of the factors to be taken into consideration. The skills still matter, since a battle between mechs eventually would just boil down to a raw fight between men. I would have better chance to win if that is the case. Hah, I'll have you, skeleton pilot, and your mount.

Gasp...

Ye Chong was a little overwhelmed. Judging by that quick combination of slashes the foe delivered, Thorn had rose to be the strongest foe Ye Chong had met so far.

A battle was brewing. The blood was boiling. The slight excitement tinted that pool of calmness in Ye Chong's head.

Since thorn had no other weapon, Ye Chong's obvious option would be to have a close-combat with him, even if the Black Covers were known for their superior hand-to-hand tactics and they were truly the expert in this indeed. No doubt, close-combats were the bread and butter of Ye Chong's fighting record. His alternate identity, YC was also known as the representative figure of mech combats on the Virtual World, or one could say, the mech combats itself.

One lift of the arm... Zoom!

Wise people think alike... or perhaps fools never differ. The moment one lifted the arm, both mechs were triggered.

The daggers were already in both hands of Han Jia as Han Jia raised a stack of afterimages all over the foe, with one right onto the throat, the other slicing towards the heart of Thorn!

The two slashes from Han Jia were dismantled as Thorn stormed itself with a veil of afterimages as well, as it performed a quick hold on Han Jia's incoming cut. Ye Chong was amazed. Even under such insane speed, he managed to maintain his accuracy in both movements and eyes while taking the right action at the right time! It was pain for this potent person to be his foe.

The two mechs then collided into each other. A swirling hurricane was formed between the arms and the blades. One could not tell what was happening as one could only see a rambling mixture of two silhouettes and thousand stacks of afterimages. If any lucky audience happened to there and recorded this to be uploaded to the Virtual World, one could imagine how much replies would be flooding the forum board.

The exchange was rapid, filled with various touch-and-gos, as both parties wielded the same clean-cut style. No conspicuous movement, no flashy bomb and array, just the traditional cuts and blows, where every part of a mech could be a weapon itself. And the fight was epic, as the two mechs were fighting in the closest

range possible.

Ye Chong in Han Jia did not even have the time to blink his eyes. The situation was so intense that a slip on the finger could have costed his life.

Thorn on the other side was also all eyes and all ears on the ticking control panel. Being a warring pilot, his experience and techniques were not something Ye Chong could even mimic on spot, although he had yet discovered a way to finish the foe directly, which was perplexing as the fight went on unexpectedly.

What a strange foe... his movements were highly complicated. Not only there were a few standard movements from the mainstream fighting methodology among the five galaxies pilots, there were also some sort of evolved gestures from a kind of martial arts which I could not really tell its exact identity, the techniques involved were too strange for me to identify. And there was also a hint of fundamental moves from our group. Thorn could feel the stress, despite the fact that those movements the foe made were merely the basics of everything. He simply did not reckon sequencing the basic movements could be this potent.

The basics could be rapid. The basics could be this interchangeable. It felt like an epic score formed with the most basic linguistic units one could image. The movements were the stacks of the foe's shadow. The movements were unpredictable. Commented Thorn.

Ye Chong, in his Han Jia, handling this nuisance of darkness, was not feeling easy either. The stress was something really new to his sensation. This was the first time he came across such skillful fighter after he incorporated the techniques he learned from Lan Yixing's microchip into his combats.

This Thorn launched his attack really rapidly, even though his model was reacting slower than mine. The timing and landing of each of his moves are impeccable, where he mainly revolves about

the use of his own thorns. What a headache... The thorns are so much tougher than I thought, my Han Jia would need three downward slashes to cut one particular spot through while I am required to dodge all his moves at the same time...

If it was not Lan Yixing's techniques I would have lost right away...

The techniques... the foe's techniques, they should be of a certain kind of style. Too many of his movements are the anomaly to my senses, I could n... Hold it!

Ye Chong remembered Instructor Hak once mentioned about a kind of martial arts technique from the ancient.

It was a very intense fight as both parties did not seem to be losing anytime.

"Fight for the Black Coves!"

"Yeah!"

Meanwhile, 20 mechs or so from the Black Coves were heading towards the Coxcomb. Their fate was a sad story.

The broken ship did not seem to be reacting anytime soon. Did we really break it just now?

That was what they assumed being the witnesses of this warship getting bombarded by their mates countless times. They had faith in their own weaponry.

The folks on the Coxcomb could not even rest their breaths, as seeing the dark enemies approaching on the projection while having no mech to protect them! The Coxcomb was merely a spaceship to be wrecked!

"All hail the Black Coves!"

"We shall take over the ship! And teach them who rules the galaxies!"

As they felt victory approaching, something occurred. Their

expressions changed.

Tick! Tick tick tick tick tick!

The Coxcomb suddenly rolled out a hefty amount of laser firing units. The number was innumerable, as if the warship was the factory of the firing units itself. The Black Covers zoned out for a second, probably they never expected a warship to have firing units this many installed, considering the amount of batteries would be needed to run the show.

Zzzt!

Before they realized, they were already surrounded by a laser web. The laser web? That was something new to the trained pilots, then the supplementary bombs came showering upon them.

The extreme firepower of the Coxcomb was a shocker to Fid and Claudia when they were restoring the order of their fleet.

Folks would never understand the power of electromagnetic cannons, to them it would be just a stream of blue light, that would be it. But unlike the electromagnetic firing, the laser beam coming off like a spectrum shower turned out to be more stunning to them.

The crowding fleet held their engines for a considerable amount of time. The crew members were dumbfounded.

The Black Covers? No one liked being a fish in the net and they were experiencing it. They had been rather disdainful towards these normal laser beams, as the beams would feel like a pump of water on their armor. Laser beams this dense however, were an eye-opener to them, a soul-taker.

Laser firing units like this could fire about 20 beams of laser per second. And the units on the Coxcomb, contrary to the tradition, were making the pilots losing their mind as they tried counting the number.

It was a depressing discovery by the Black Covers that these

beams were not blind-shot after all, they were more accurate than their own snipers. No matter how sturdy their armors were, when hundreds of beams aiming one single mech, it would only lead to an explosion, nothing else. The addition bombs scattered in the space also had also weakened their mechs before they realized.

The glow of 20 mechs exploding had illuminated the space again. The laser web vanished the very second when people were blinking their eyes in blank dismay, as if the Coxcomb withdrew its fangs like the beast returning to its tamed self after a feast.

The contrast was beyond their comprehension.

...

Ah!

Thorn seemed to have noticed something but ... but he was not in the mood to take a look around. His screen, his eyes were all on that skeleton mech before him. Sweats were stuck at his fringe, as his ruffled hair went standing like the bushes on a globe. His body was soaked wet. The stress over the time... it was pushing him to the limits. His hands felt fatigued since it was consuming to maintain such amount of APM even for a strong man like him.

But he would not... he would never have a break. The dark twin daggers from the foe were like twinning serpents, aiming their prey and frantically they attacked. He knew if he were to hold back a little, within that brief second, the twin daggers would get beyond his defense. Not only the daggers, the shield was also a danger to look out for. The shield was similar to those mechs of the Black Coves, having sharp edges.

Pant... Pant...

Ye Chong's breathing became heavier, although he maintained the greatest hand speed he could imagine. The movements he carried out were highly complicated, the controls were not simple and were obviously more than a tap and slide. It was the first time

Ye Chong maintained the maximum speed for such a long time.

Han Jia held the incoming punches with its daggers. The thorns of the dim yellow fist were a wonder, a mystery of they material, for they were unhurt by the edges of the dagger despite all the slashes and slams.

Right when Thorn's punches were held, he made a thrashing knock with the elbow, the thorns were glowing cold. Ye Chong in his Han Jia believed that his armor could not take the sharp thorn so he backed off like a breeze, trying to dodge.

The few thorns over the elbow were then disengaged and began propelling towards Han Jia. Hah! Thorn was confident that with this twist carried out at such a distance, the foe could never see this coming! These thorns would deal great amount of damage, they would at least inflict something on the foe's mech even if they could not penetrate the armor.

To experts like the Black Covers warring pilots, one simple plot twist was more than enough to turn the tide.

Klink! Thup thup thup thup!

Han Jia blocked the thorns with its shield. Ye Chong had seen this coming ever since the time when he saw Thorn ruptured the Beauty's Secretion with its spikes moments ago. The spikes were absolutely something to watch out for, since it was able to shatter Beauty's Secretion enveloped in skeleton shells.

Ye Chong then felt the delay in movements of the foe, even though he had no idea why, he changed his battle approach anyway, as Han Jia started weaving in different directions frequently, which were disrupting Thorn's senses. Han Jia's speed was superior from the beginning so it was a torturing act for Ye Chong to abuse it against Thorn.

Thorn could feel his hands getting spasm soon. His fingers danced madly on the control panel. Man I never knew this skeleton

prick could be this sustainable in battle.

Absolutely, no one would know Ye Chong's inhuman vitality till one tasted it, while his APM was the result of Mu's continuous training. The marble trainings were once a hell for Ye Chong. Getting spasms was something usual for Ye Chong who underwent the intensive training courses daily. No man would be aware of the torment Ye Chong had undergone in order to get specs like these.

Frankly speaking, from the aspect of techniques, Ye Chong was clearly inferior compared to the experienced foe. Vitality-wise for long-term battle would be a different story. Ye Chong was only exhaling louder than usual, which mostly was due to the brewing excitement inside him.

Ye Chong had long understood the importance of high APM in mech piloting, although not all inputs were effective execution. To a mech processor, its effective input-execution would be limited to a certain amount of figure, which once your APM had overtaken the figure, it would be a mere waste of stamina as you accelerate further while most of your inputs would be neglected.

And to avoid that, Ye Chong had been trying to minimize the amount of inputs to execute a specific action. And his attempt had been proven to be effective in the battle today. If he were to face Thorn in the past, he would be inputting much more commands and probably be drained dead in the end.

The following attacks of Thorn remained its ferocity, although the execution was not as seamless as before. Ye Chong could tell the lethargy within, but the intenseness of the battle had grown beyond their imagination.

Thorn, as his fingers moved on, had never seen a man being able to last this long in a close-combat before. It was then he noticed his weakness being his vitality. Under normal circumstance most players would be knocked out with those sinister tricks of his. But he met the wrong opponent today, as the foe seemed to be well-

aware of all kinds of dirty tricks as well.

A sudden urge rose in him to back off and forfeit the battle, as he knew that he would surely lose if he persisted. The skeleton pilot had known most of his moves after exchanging for so long and did not seem to be giving up anytime soon.

Like seriously if there was one moment his hand twitched, he would be stabbed right to his fatality with those daggers.

"Ye, retreat. The remaining 5 warships are heading towards us." Shang's voice sounded a little agitated.

Ye Chong had a shock. He looked at Thorn who jumped away, taking a turn and was running away.

Tink! A fine blue lining zapped through Thorn's body.

Ye Chong could see the blue beam penetrating the armor of Thorn and zapping further into the endless space.

"You are welcomed."

The voice rang proud in his head as Ye Chong turned back and saw Shang waving his weapon of vanity behind the ajar gate.

"Why can't he be the expert in style..." muttered Ye Chong, who zoomed towards the Coxcomb without style...

Well. You would do the same.

If 5 warships were behind you.

Chapter 231: Pilot of Darklight

A mech flew out of the dark warship. Very swiftly it arrived by Thorn's side and seized the lifeless commander floating in space; like a bird returning to its nest, a flawless swing drew towards the opened gate.

"My lord, I have returned," a gentle voice rang in the captain's room.

"Mhm, discovery?" an emotionless voice stated.

"Thorn has officially deceased, caused by a recursion ray right through his heart. An immediate death. Other than the two pores about the size of fingers, numerous slashes were found over his body. He should have been involved in an intensive fight before, where his foe could be also a fighter. The speculation, my lord, is that Thorn probably had a struggling fight with an ace fighter and was then sniped by one with a superior marksmanship, thus the instant death," the gentle voice reported serenely, although the lips were shaking when "recursion ray" was mentioned.

"Recursion? Are you sure it's the recursion?" The warship commander's emotionless voice was slightly quivering as he spoke.

"Yes sir," the voice remained calm.

"Looks like our nemesis could not hold up any longer, though I wonder when did the MPA have their own ace fighters? I do feel much stranger when I realized the warship we faced was clearly not belonged to the MPA," he scratched his chin and pondered.

"My lord, requesting a follow-up on this," the gentle voice sounded serene as ever, while the commander could see the will of battle blazing in his eyes.

"Alright then. Better if you do. It's been 50 years since we met the Pilot of Darklight as well as the Hunter in White. I am very much looking forward to this war. Mhm, bring Little Rock along. I will

also hand you a quick transportation. Just go. Also, check out their motives for me," the emotionless voice actually sounded concerned about his underlings.

"Thank you my lord," the voice was filled with gratitude.

He boarded the powership, which was a boat of small diagonal, able to accommodate just two passengers. If one would relate the size of a warship to a large fish, the powership could very much be that thin bone within. Although the powership was rather petite compared to its counterparts in the armory of the Black Coves, its capabilities were not something to be shunned. It was mainly for infiltration and hunting purposes for its speed was superior while being capable of performing all kinds of turns easily. It was also installed with a massive amount of batteries to ensure sustainability in long travels. Technology-wise the Black Coves might be lagging behind compared to the R&D of MPA, but that was it. Black Coves were not incompetent at any other aspects. This tiny boat could also perform a space-jump and everyone in the Black Coves believed it to be probably the smallest spaceship that could warp through spaces in the entire galaxy.

The powership hovered out of the gate of its mothership, it then zoomed towards the Coxcomb.

One of the underlings in the captain's room was hurrying the way out.

"Remain on our course," the commander's voice suddenly echoed.

"What about those privateers?" the underling was looking confused.

"Let them be. We have wasted enough time on them. Now we got to catch up, it's all about speed," said the commander as he rose from his seat and turned away after giving one last glance at the speeding powership on the screen. He left the room.

"Little Rock, it's your time," smiled Luo Wei, who had a charming smile of a late twenties that made him approaching, especially with that handsome face of his, a charmer he was. And no matter what had happened before him, he seemed to be always able to keep that serenity in his tone, which convinced the people his reliability.

"Sir Luo Wei... I... heh..." Little Rock's face reddened. Compared to the handsome master leading the powership, the rocky boy was just an average boy. Nothing particularly attractive was found on his face. He was short and looked so puny that people wondered if he had ever eaten. But the Black Covers, despite being hefty and potent, were not looking down on this feeble boy. He was in fact, a genius, an absolute genius after all.

"Sir Luo Wei... is that..." halted Little Rock. "Is that White Hunter really great?"

"Hmmm..." Luo Wei's voice ran deep, "It was also my first time seeing a White Hunter. They are eye-catching with their Recursion. Right, it's a type of energy-based firearm that launches recursion rays. They are also master of ranged and extreme-ranged attacks. Rather terrorizing if you ask me. Based on the information from our heads, the grading system of MPA is the same stern as the Black Coves, while the Pilot of Darklight just so happened to be at the same level as the White Hunter. But it's rare to have a White Hunter in MPA. Most of them were Divine in the tree. So it's really weird to see a White Hunter here."

"Meh," Little Rock gave a disdainful look. "That Widdy Hunter is nothing in front of Luo Wei the great. Don't they know how great our Pilots of Darklight are? Do they think their Widdy Hunter could win us?"

Luo Wei responded that statement with a smile. He said nothing, although his mind wandered away for a sec, for he knew that it would not be possible for these people to understand the depth of the Black Coves, not even himself, probably, what he knew was a

mere tip of the iceberg.

Zztt!

Shang screamed, "Wait what, those warships are leaving?"

"Leaving?" Ye Chong was also shocked by the report. Leaving the nemesis was not something the Black Covers would do.

"Wait no!" The mechanical voice shrieked, "There's one powership coming! Man we almost got cheated. Ha! Ha! Ha! Thanks to my wisdom and amazing sight! Tsk, tsk tsk, how could they..." And Shang got vain of himself again.

Ye Chong had no word for the artificial indulgence, like for real.

On the hologram screen he saw, that particular miniature spaceship rushing its way to them. The speed astonished Ye Chong a little.

"This fast? This could already compete with a mech!"

"Ye, this is known as a 'powership'. It's empowered of course it's fast. Holy Mama, Ye, we are in hot water..." Shang sounded as if his tail was snapped.

"What's wrong, Shang?" asked Ye Chong peculiarly.

"Ye, the pilot of this ship has to be an ace. The ship is prominently used to infiltrate enemies' bases or to perform counter strike. They would utilize the maximum force of their mech to annihilate their foes. Whoever running on his mission has to be the ace of the aces, not even Thorn could be close. Ye, we had overdone it. Something big is coming!"

"A stronger foe than Thorn...?" Ye Chong's face drained. Fighting with Thorn was already energy consuming for him. He could never imagine killing Thorn by himself. Defeating foes was a fundamentally different concept to killing them. Anyone with experience in battles would know that.

And there he came, someone stronger than Thorn.

... Are we done? No way I would win... I wouldn't even survive... But what about Mu Shang...

"Ha!" In the midst of Ye Chong's misery, Shang was giggling, "Ha! Ha! Jajajajajajaja! Ye, did you get frightened? Man Ye you could be a scaredy cat sometimes! Kekekekekeke! I was just messing with you! Tsk, tsk, tsk. Ye, you were that cool and indifferent usually, never knew I would have the chance to see the true you inside. Don't judge a Ye by his face..." The last syllable trailed off, it was weird.

"Ugh." The veins bloated on his forehead, there were greens and some blacks. He looked around, his hands swinging, nothing throwable was found. "Ugh!" And he gave up.

Shang - probably sensed Ye Chong's coming eruption - stated cheerfully, "Jejeje, Ye my boy, don't panic, I have already calculated our warping point. Hah! They wouldn't get us. Don't even think about it!"

Beep. A fancy tap on the button.

Almost immediately after Shang's words, Ye Chong could feel the acceleration by the Coxcomb. They had to give up... They no longer had the stamina to follow the privateers. Where would Grandpa Qian be? What about the others? Ye Chong was rational as he gave up searching for them under such chaos.

All he could do was to pray them having a good luck, a very good luck.

Beep. Beep. Tick. Little Rock's face was grave as his eyes fixed upon the floating screen of the processor where the data was streaming in ticking beeps.

"Master Luo Wei, I have calculated their warping point. For the exact coordination, I have already submitted it through the processor," he sounded a little tired. Shang would probably be jumping up high with his bolts raining the ground if Shang ever

discovered the fact that their coordination had already been estimated with mere calculation even a second before their space-warp procedure. The world was vast and limitless, where always a new genius would appear. In whichever field one would be, there was never an absolution where one remained on the top. The superb calculating ability that Little Rock possessed was the main reason he was called to assist Luo Wei by the commander.

The Coxcomb did not realize it at all. No one would believe this tale where a person was able to calculate the exact coordination of the destination the space-jumper was heading, merely by a grip on the final data before the jumper warped out of the dimension. Not even Shang could do it, Mu was not confident to assert that too.

The Coxcomb was all torn on the outside, at least the main frames were not destroyed so it was not a problem to warp between spaces.

The Coxcomb's momentum increased over the time and before they realized, they had already zapped out of the warping point. Phew... Ye Chong and Shang could finally have a moment to catch their breath. Be it the god of war or the greatest commander, facing two warships at once would not be an effortless task, especially when one had to face a mighty fighter and fight for one's own life. It would be a blatant lie if one would claim to be still kicking and alive after the fight.

On the fence between death and life, humans were like ragged dolls pulled by the hidden thread from both sides. And once they escaped the dead-or-alive moment, the thread would loosen, the ragged doll would have a resting land on the fence, as reminded the flooding fatigue over its body.

"Holy Fal! Ye!" Shang was in bewilderment as he shouted, "That powership had just warped out of the point! How in Fal did they know our warping point's destination?"

Ye Chong was dumbfounded as well, although he did not react as

dramatically as Shang since he was not aware of how space-to-space connection worked.

The foe's craft further accelerated while retaining a distance right beyond the proximity of the laser firing units. Shang was annoyed by the pesky little ship behind. We will use the electromagnetic cannons. Wait no, we can't. This pest was too small to make the firing count, especially when it had demonstrated quite a level of piloting skill. And it remains at one point where the lasers could not reach. I'll use Recursion then. The only thing I could have used. Still... Recursion might be great, it is not possible for it to penetrate their ship. Recursion cannon? Distance and accuracy-wise... No. And Shang gave up these ideas which seemed too far-fetched to succeed.

The powership did not seem intended of anything just yet, as it sluggishly tagged the Coxcomb along. The Coxcomb could not do another space-warp as the foe - being so close to them - could have easily disrupted their warping sequence by a simple firing or whatsoever right at that second when they accelerated.

Ye Chong and Shang looked at each other, their temper extinguished and shrugged.

"Shang, how about..." frowned Ye Chong, "I'll go and lure them and you snipe them with Recursion."

"Wait, let's try the Beauty's Secretion first." Sneered Shang.

10 Beauty's Secretions fresh off the pipe, heading towards the powership behind.

Ye Chong and Shang glued their eyes on the screen, fearing to miss that very moment of their life. The Beauty's Secretions overcame the void in silence and were hitting the ship soon. "Got yo-" And the foe launched one laser firing unit and shot down all 10 Beauty's Secretions which then vanished as a cloud of purplish mist.

"Ye, calm down, stay here," Shang regained his calmness. "Rest yourself. You have been fighting for so long. Your stamina is fully depleted. Fight only after you have recovered. Hmph, I might be incomplete and crippled but that doesn't mean some pesky bits could flaunt their dirty tricks in front of me!" Shang subconsciously displayed his tyranny, which was odd to Ye Chong's eyes as he wondered... What exactly was Shang in the past? How did he behave? Was it like this?

"Keke, well the pests aren't approaching anytime soon, anyway. Kekekeke..." The tone and the expression of Shang were giving Ye Chong goosebumps, which shattered his speculation. Maybe I was thinking too much... Yeah, Shang actually got serious and stern? It must be an illusion. Feeling defeated, Ye Chong picked a resting spot and fell asleep quickly.

It would be impossible for one to actually infiltrate the Coxcomb without being noticed by the artificial pairs, like seriously, how would that be possible? Ye Chong might not be that confident to declare Mu Shang's detection system to be the most advanced in the world, but their system had got to be one of the most advanced. That would be convincingly undeniable.

It was a comfortable nap Ye Chong took, as he felt quite replenished when he woke up. He took some food and hydrated himself a little, "How's it going?"

"The same." Shang sounded bored, "That pest was just following us. Nothing much."

"What about our current location?" asked Ye Chong.

"Cyana..." Shang said as he yawned.

"Cyana? Isn't that the territory declared by the Sanctuary?"

"If the news reporter was not lying, yeah."

Ye Chong did a stretch and swung his limbs, then performed a brief set of Lan's martial arts techniques to warm up. And he felt

his body activated on all sides, going strong.

He then deployed Han Jia from the alternate dimension and resupplied the batteries on it.

"Well, Shang, I'll be heading out to have a look. You coming?" asked Ye Chong.

"Nah, I'm good. I just do my sniping here. It's a shame that your materials are only able to craft a Recursion, if I have "that thing", I would have... Hmph! Recursion is just a toy, which works on plain shooting at mech. It would not work well on anything else. Sigh, Recursion cannon could have done the trick, but the accuracy is way too low," Shang packaged his disdain towards Recursion fancily.

"Aren't mechs for mechs? Are we going to use a mech to fight a warship?" it sounded ridiculous to Ye Chong.

"Who said a mech is incapable of fighting a warship? Kek! You'll know one day, of how mech and warship are inversely conditional, how one would break the condition formed by the others. Ye, be careful. Always the fiercest stays in the powership. Anything they do, you make a quick back off, and I'll snipe him," concerned Shang.

"Okay," Ye Chong took a deep breath and climbed upon Han Jia.

Ye Chong flew out of the Coxcomb.

...

"Skeleton mech! It's a skeleton mech! No wonder Thorn had a hard time fighting!" Luo Wei seemed astounded.

Little Rock - filled with disbelief - looked at Han Jia in the projection, "Sir, is this the skeleton mech the legend has mentioned?"

"Yes, should be it. Little Rock, you'll take over the steering. I'll have a nice talk with him," something was shining in his gentle

eyes.

"Alright," nodded Little Rock, piloting a powership was not difficult for a little genius like him.

After being in a cold war for the past 2 days, finally something had happened to break the ice, as the mech flew out of the gate.

Ye Chong, again, had never seen such model from the Black Covers before. It was a model about 10 meter tall, likewise to other models it had a great body proportion while giving off a dark metallic glow. The slender main body gave off a vibe of elegance which reminded Ye Chong of the MPA, except well, the MPA's mech was white while the one he was seeing glowed in black. The mech was missing the usual thorns adorned on the other Black Covers' units, hence the texture looked rather clean and smooth. A gorgeous seamless curve could be seen over its slender legs, with a hemispheric armor piece at the knees which reinforced its imagery, reminding the foes that it was not as weak as it appeared.

The weapon installed was a pair of moon blade. A long narrow blade with outrageous curl, with the handle laid at the center. The blade body was dark, tainted. No glow could be see, although the edge of the blade was shining bright. It felt like as if a gentleman in dark tuxedo had come with a pair of silver moons, standing in the midst of darkness of the space.

Ye Chong could not help but to compliment the craftsmanship, as being experienced as a critic, his eyes lay upon every joints of the mech. It was not the weapon which amazed him. The little details could always depict the craftsmanship of the mech. And Ye Chong felt there was nothing he could nitpick on the mech hovering before him. The Black Coves was as dark as he knew, dark and bottomless, bottomless and unknown, where one could never know if a more fearsome beast would appear at some point, as these powerful pilots could be a master in certain field.

Ye Chong's cold gaze then fell upon that strange scythe. His heart

quivered. He was not fearing the unknown, rather he feared knowing that among the Black Covers, the use of a unique weapon always would be paired with a unique set of skills.

Okay... well...

"Darklight!" He heard Shang screaming, "The Pilot of Darklight!"

Chapter 232: Super Training Partner

What mech pilot?

Ye Chong was startled. Just then, a silver light appeared before him, shining almost painfully bright. A strong sense of danger enveloped him. Almost reflexively, Ye Chong's hands began to dance quickly on the controls. At the same time, Han Jia stepped back and raised the dagger in its hands against that silver light.

Ding! Han Jia's daggers felt like it had hit a starship, and Ye Chong could not help but be flung backwards.

Ye Chong groaned. For every mech pilot, it was dangerous to lose control of his or her mech, no matter how fast they could recover. Ye Chong's hands were flying across the controls. For the first time ever, Ye Chong felt that his hands were not fast enough.

Han Jia went eagle-spread, its engines firing intermittently as it came to a mind-bending stop. Then, it suddenly changed directions. This was a very difficult series of movements, executed when the mech was almost out of the pilot's control. Ye Chong's excellent mech piloting skills and adaptability had saved his life.

A silver crescent shone in midair, so very close to Han Jia. Ye Chong could see it clearly in all its beauty and fatality.

Ye Chong's mind was not blank, without fear or surprise. He thought nothing, for there was no time to think of anything. His movements were all done out of instinct from his years of battle experience.

Ye Chong was also at his limit in executing that move earlier. However, the other party was not going to let him go. The silver crescent rushed to him like an incandescent wave. Ye Chong could feel the overwhelming attack coming like a sea of mercury, indefensible.

Was he really going to die here?

Ye Chong's survival instinct could not accept that. Time suddenly stopped out of the blue. Ye Chong watched as the silver wave slowly approached him, like a movie put on slow motion. His brain turned so quickly like never before, and his hands moved crazily fast, with his calm eyes now burning with excitement.

Han Jia made an adder-style turn, but the silver wave followed it closely behind.

Thomas's spin, T-shaped turn ... Han Jia moved like a performer of a grand show, trying out all sorts of battle techniques. Nonetheless, the other party's mech piloting skills were just as impressive, and it never once fell for Han Jia's maneuvers. Han Jia's movements were already at its limit, but the other party seemed to be capable of keeping with it.

Ye Chong saw that the other party still pursued him closely from behind, and he came to a decision. Han Jia stopped moving forward and began to fly backwards. Like a compressed spring being released, its body bent at the sudden change in momentum almost uncontrollably as the mech launched itself backwards at an even faster speed.

Inside the pilot cabin, Ye Chong grew pale. Han Jia's action was putting a heavy physical burden on him.

Ye Chong's movement surprised the other party, and Ye Chong could see that the silver wave grew hesitant. Ye Chong's glowed as his hands executed a series of movements that he had done so many times before.

Han Jia wielded the dagger in its right hand and swiped towards the other party in the midst of the silver wave's hesitation.

Ding! The solid hit from his dagger encouraged Ye Chong greatly. He was also to see the other party's movements clearly for the first time! Without room for doubt, Han Jia's other dagger struck again at an angle against the other crescent blade of the opponent.

Ye Chong's desperate attack was powerful, so much so that it surprised Luo Wei. He almost lost control of his Darklight. This startled him, and sparked his interest for the pilot in this full-skeleton mech for the first time.

Nonetheless, with his long combat experience, he did not forcefully hold his ground, but flew backwards with the momentum.

Seeing his opponent moving away, Ye Chong controlled Han Jia to throw out two auto lock-on shurikens and immediately left for Coxcomb. Han Jia was accelerated to its maximum speed, as Ye Chong demonstrated a perfect example of cut-and-run.

Luo Wei was a little stunned to see his opponent escaping, but the two shurikens were already coming towards him. Luo Wei did not panic. As the two shurikens crossed over each other, Darklight's crescent blade drew upwards to trace a silver arc in the air, slicing the two shurikens into clean halves in one go.

Luo Wei watched as the full-skeleton mech took the opportunity to widen the distance between them. He smiled faintly and flew contentedly back to his powership.

Little Rock looked at Luo Wei with admiring eyes and spoke excitedly, "Master Luo Wei, you're so strong! That fellow couldn't even fight back ..."

Luo Wei smiled warmly but did not reply. While the pilot in the full-skeleton mech was not particularly skillful, his deftness and adaptability were unexpected.

Han Jia returned to Coxcomb bewildered. Ye Chong came out of the pilot cabin looking very pale and uneasy. He sat heavily on the floor and heaved a long sigh of relief. It was only then that he realized his back was wet from sweating, and the horrifying chill that came with it.

Ye Chong had escaped from death in the truest sense. He still

could not calm himself down. Even though he had struggled to survive many times in the past, he had never come close to what had happened today, nearly defenseless against the situation.

"Ye Chong, you did well!" Shang's words sounded like sarcasm, and Ye Chong could not help but roll his eyes.

However, Shang continued evenly, "Ye, you really did well this time. I didn't know he was actually a Darklight mech pilot, or I would have stopped you from going. From your battle against Thorn yesterday, I believed that you are on the same level as Thorn now. There is a huge gap between Thorn and Darklight mech pilots. Darklight mech pilots could almost certainly kill their enemies, and you had managed to escape from one, and that really surprised me, especially those last few moves. Hehe, however, I've also come up with a wonderful idea!" Shang's final words brought another chill to Ye Chong.

Even so, Ye Chong knew that he was safe just now. When he was flying back towards Coxcomb, Shang had been at the opened hatch, holding onto Recursion and aiming towards him. If he was really in trouble, Shang would make his move.

"Darklight mech pilots, in actual fact, Ye, are not very strong in Black Cove. There are many more stronger combatants above them. The MPA and the Sanctuary do not lack capable mech pilots, but I'm not so sure about the Freedom Alliance." Shang suddenly paused for a moment before continuing, "Besides, Ye, these mech pilots are not good enough to be in the top rankings. That is another level, fit for the best of mech pilots." Shang spoke almost melancholically.

Ye Chong listened closely, entranced by Shang's every word.

"Ye, you still have a long way to go, if you want to truly be the master of your destiny." Shang spoke those words with the demeanor of the wise, a strange sensation for Ye Chong. "Ye, you chose close range combat, and this is quite the opposite from me

and Mu. Mu and I are good at shooting, that's why we didn't extend much guidance for you while you train. Fortunately, you learn quickly, and can reach your current level by learning and thinking on your own, and gaining experience in actual combat. I must say, Ye, you're a genius in this! Now, since you have chosen to specialize in close range combat, then you must only rely on yourself to improve further." Shang spoke seriously.

"Mu's summaries are always so dull," Shang said with some disdain, and Ye Chong could not help being a little frustrated with him.

"Hehe, Ye, I've come up with a wonderful idea." Shang sounded almost wicked, and Ye Chong felt a sense of foreboding.

"Ye, since we don't have a systematic way of learning, we could only rely on accumulating experience through actual combat, and slowly analyzing them, yes?" Shang lectured patiently.

Ye Chong nodded. Shang was right. Most of what he learned was from actual combat, and real battles were actually very helpful to improve one's strength.

"Hehe, Ye, compared to average opponents, isn't it more helpful if your opponent is strong?" Shang continued.

Ye Chong nodded. Shang was right in this too. Fighting against a strong opponent would not only allow him to realize where he was lacking, but also provide a model for him to learn from. Most of Ye Chong's techniques were "borrowed" in this way.

Shang grew excited. "Heh, that's right! Ye, think about it, isn't that a strong opponent on that powership?"

Ye Chong started.

"Ye, look, what a good training partner. The man's a Darklight mech pilot, definitely a superior training partner! Besides, we don't have to spend a single zuan, and he's brought his own energy cells. Hehe, Ye, where in the universe can you find such a good

deal?! We have to make use of this opportunity, it'd be a such a pity to waste it. Hehe, isn't his intention to follow us? Then let's make the most of him!" Shang was now talking like an unscrupulous trader.

Ye Chong was hooked by Shang's idea. If he really had such a training partner, then he would be able to learn so much more. In any case, he would definitely be able to improve himself. After that close call earlier, Ye Chong wanted more than ever to make himself stronger. The vulnerable feeling of losing control of his destiny when facing Luo Wei was horrible.

Ye Chong pondered on the idea. "Shang, your idea has a little problem. That guy can be a good assassin, but as a training partner, he won't be so obedient." While he really wanted to fight against such a strong opponent, he recalled how powerful that man had been, and how close he was to death. Ye Chong may want to improve himself, but he was not so stubborn as to disregard his own safety. He cannot imagine how the other party would agree to become a training partner.

Shang laughed and said, "Ye, don't worry, whenever you go to fight him, I'll be at the hatch. If you're in danger I'll shoot the guy, force him back, then he'll not be able to harm you. Hehe, I'll threaten him but keep him unharmed. After all, he's your training partner!"

Ye Chong recalled then that Shang was also capable himself, even if he never seemed to act like one.

"Sounds like a good plan." Ye Chong pondered longer, and thought of something else. "What if he refuses to come out?"

Shang replied with a sinister tone, "If he won't come out at all, then you'll go to his powership. If he chases us, we'll speed up with warp jumps, hehe. Even if he can calculate where we would emerge, I can still make two continuous short distance warp jumps, then they'll not be able to find us, plus we'll lose our tail.

However, if someone on that powership can calculate our first position, then he must have thought of this as well. If your training partner still refuses to come out, then you can start dismantling his powership, hehe, see if he'll yield."

Ye Chong stared at Shang for a long moment before gasping, "Shang, you're ruthless!" Shang's idea was really cunning. Ye Chong turned it over and over in his mind, and could not think of a reason to reject it.

Shang laughed sinisterly, "Hehehe ..."

Poor Luo Wei. He had now unwillingly become a superior training partner.

Ye Chong worked hard studying Shang's holographic recording. He analysed the opponent's every move, even replicating Luo Wei's two crescent blades in the metal laboratory. He repeated Luo Wei's moves again and again, hoping to find a way to counter them.

What struck Ye Chong the most was Luo Wei's first attack. The silver glimmer that he saw did not look particularly threatening, but the power that came with it was surprising. It was then that Han Jia suddenly lost control, leading to his narrow escape from death. For Ye Chong, holographic recordings of combat between powerful opponents were very valuable for study. He was at least vaguely familiar with Black Cove's close range battle style from his short time at Black Cove, so battle recordings of Black Cove mech pilots were particularly valuable to him.

The MPA excelled in long range combat, hence they were not so useful to Ye Chong. The Sanctuary's strange ways were even harder to understand, it being the most mysterious of the Three Forces. As for the Freedom Alliance, until now, Ye Chong had never seen any of them in actual combat, so he could make no reasonable conclusions about them.

Nonetheless, they must have their own merits, or the Three

Forces would not even deign to notice them. It seemed that until now, the Three Forces were careful against this new arrival, the Freedom Alliance. It was thus apparent that they were a force to be reckoned with.

Ye Chong frowned in thought as he watched the holographic recording. He had only fought briefly against the Darklight mech pilot, but this short recording had taken him much effort and time to absorb and understand. In the end, however, he finally found the key.

He did not know what Black Cove called this move, so Ye Chong called it the Z-shaped draw-strike. This move traced the outline of a reverse Z, and could triple the attack power compared to a normal strike. No wonder he lost control. When Ye Chong could finally execute the move himself, he was already deeply impressed of its creator. He would never have imagined such a clever way of drawing energy into the muscles before striking.

He even tried executing the move with his bare hands. With his muscles and the Lan family's energy control techniques, Ye Chong's punch was packed with deadly power.

Even so, there were still many things in the short holographic recording that he could not understand. However, he can take it slowly. After all, didn't he have a superior training partner now? The thought of Shang's weird expression could not help but make him smile.

Han Jia and Shang stood side by side at the hatch's opening. Shang waved with Recursion in his hand, and affected a valiant tone, "Ye, go, you have nothing to worry!"

Ye Chong was now regulating his breathing. He must forget that Shang was protecting him, so that he could enter the right combat mode quickly.

Calm with a little excitement - that was what Ye Chong thought of as the perfect mental state to be in for combat. As he regulated

his thoughts, he could feel something warm flowing within him, the mental state born of a mixture of calmness and excitement.

Han Jia's flew swiftly towards the powership that stuck like a barnacle to Coxcomb at the back.

As Shang expected, the Darklight mech came to welcome Han Jia.

Ye Chong charged without fear. He chose to be proactive this time. Luo Wei was surprised, but his eyes were calm as he countered steadily.

Ye Chong's first attack was with the Z-shaped draw-strike.

Luo Wei was even more surprised now, but he did not receive the blow head on. Instead, he twisted oddly like a black snake and shook off Ye Chong's Z-shaped draw-strike attack. Then, he drew his two crescent blades and aimed for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong was confounded. The difference in their strengths was too great, and he was quickly out of his depth.

Luo Wei's eyes gleamed. He must not let go of this guy this time. He could almost be certain now that this full-skeleton mech was the one that fought against Thorn.

Just when he was about to deliver the fatal blow, Luo Wei suddenly had a strong feeling of being locked on. Black Cove and the MPA shared a deep hostility between them, and among the Three Forces, the battles between Black Cove and the MPA were the most frequent. This made Black Cove mech pilots more sensitive than usual to the feeling of being locked on. He abruptly recalled that the starship still had a White Hunter. Luo Wei felt cold sweat beginning to form on his forehead. He abandoned his plan and turned back, executing all sorts of evasive moves.

This was the best he could manage, and perhaps his best was not enough.

Curiously, however, the blue beam that he was wary of never

appeared. As he flew back into his powership, he saw an opened hatch on the opponent's starship, where a semi-concealed blue-white mech was holding Recursion, looking coldly at him.

Chapter 233: Transformation

Luo Wei was vexed. He realized that something was wrong. That full-skeleton mech had come almost every day for a fight, and every time he was about to strike a killer blow, that strong deep of danger would arise within him. Once, a recursion beam had left a bruise on his mech's cheek. He understood well that the recursion beam was a warning.

That semi-concealed mech on this strange warship was using Recursion, but Luo Wei was certain that it was not a White Hunter. White Hunters never made him feel so threatened before, and his combat instincts had never failed him.

It had been a few days, and he never noticed any other mech besides these two. Could they be the only passengers of this ship?

Luo Wei was confounded. The warship was strange, no matter how he looked at it.

To think that an electromagnetic cannon made of black gold alloy was found on this starship. He could not figure out how they whipped up such a powerful weapon. The close range full-skeleton mech and the always semi-concealed powerful mech armed with Recursion was not a duo that could be found in the MPA.

He also had reason to believe that this odd duo was not from any of the Three Forces. As far as he knew, black gold would never be lost to outsiders. Different black gold alloy could have different proportions of black gold and hence, different quality. Their properties would not be alike. The EM cannon used by the other party, however, had a high proportion of black gold, implying that they had the material in significant quantities.

Black Coves true nature was not as outsiders would imagine. Black Cove mech pilots were usually solitary, and spent most of their time training. Competition was strong within the organization, an important factor that led to powerful Black Cove

mech pilots. Unless it was an order from the higher-ups, the pilots preferred not to concern themselves with other matters. This was why Luo Wei did not know the reason Black Cove was pursuing Ye Chong.

However, the odd warship before him was also very intriguing. If this was not the Cyana Galaxy, the Sanctuary's territory, he would have called for backup. Now, however, he was stuck in this awkward situation.

The mech pilot of the full-skeleton mech seemed to be very energetic, more than he could imagine. He came for battle every day like he never needed to rest. At first, Luo Wei handled the battles easily, but the routine became harder and harder. That was when he realized that he was dealing with a genius, a battle genius.

Ye Chong had no time to think on his situation. In truth, he was spending his days in quite a fulfilling way. Aside from his daily battles, he spent the rest of his time studying the battle recordings. He must find the reason the opponent was better than him, and try to improve himself. Ye Chong had great talent in combat, and in just the span of a few months, he was able to undergo a transformation. Whenever he was busy, Shang would stay out of his way, holding Recursion in his lap while he sat by the hatch, like he was deep in thought.

Ye Chong was beginning to understand Luo Wei's battle patterns. To him, it was not the most powerful moves that made a person strong, but solid fundamentals and excellent split decision making during battle.

Under this high pressure "training", Ye Chong's talents were fully unleashed. From his initial near-death experience under the opponent's crescent blades to his current form of being able to fend for himself, Ye Chong could hardly believe how he had transformed.

Ye Chong's pressure on Luo Wei grew stronger. Luo Wei never

expected to see anyone improve so much in such a short time. Luo Wei had always been proud of his own innate talent, but even he had spent five years to rise from Thorn mech pilot to the status of Darklight mech pilot.

This mech pilot had used only a few months to improve himself from a Thorn mech pilot level to a Darklight mech pilot level. As the person who enabled this, Luo Wei did not feel any sense of accomplishment, but only despair and humiliation. This, however, had also made him more eager to win.

Every person has something they are most proud of, that they would never allow to be trampled upon.

Luo Wei ignored the mech pilot with Recursion, and fought with his all whenever the full-skeleton mech came for a fight. After the battles, he would return to his ship to study the battle recordings. He could not stand watching how his opponent improved day by day while he stagnated at his current level.

Luo Wei's full force attacks were immediately felt by Ye Chong. However, after the initial quick defeats, he soon adjusted and improved even faster.

This situation continued on for a few more days. Luo Wei was pleased to find that he himself was also improving, at a speed that he would have been impressed with before. However, now that there was this other crazy fellow with him, he could not exactly be happy with his achievements.

Luo Wei had already forgotten his original mission. After he realized the benefits, Luo Wei put more effort into the battles. An opportunity like this was rare. In an organization like Black Cove, where strength decided one's status, he understood the value of strength. Besides, the higher-ups did not exactly give up clear orders. He had flexibility in his mission this time, and so he indulged in the joy of battling to improve his skills.

Ye Chong's varied and flexible combat style greatly expanded his

mind, and he worked even more earnestly to train with his "partner". The strong mech pilot never appeared again, implying that the blue beam of death never crossed the space between them again. Luo Wei believed that they had no plans of killing him in the immediate future. The other party may choose to end his life at any time, but Luo Wei did not want to miss this golden opportunity to improve himself. To him, the risk was worth it.

Luo Wei guessed right. Shang was having fun with Little Rock every day. Shang was surprised that the other party could compute his warp jump locations accurately, so he sent a message to him. This earned an unexpected reply from the other party.

Little Rock was a computation genius, and Shang was similarly capable at some level. The two of them were a good fit together. Little Rock was still young, and obviously the academic type. Once it involved his expertise, he could forget about everything else.

Thus, a strange situation arose. The enemies began to have a dialogue with each other.

Ye Chong could not fight against Luo Wei for even longer. Their battles would often take half a day to come to an end. After so many days of battle, they were now very familiar with each other's moves, and so the battles stretched on longer and longer. However, this served to emphasise Ye Chong's advantage in stamina. The fact was vexing to Luo Wei. How could a Black Cove mech pilot be physically weaker than another outsider? No Black Cove mech pilot would believe his story. In Black Cove, all mech pilots were physically strong, and Darklight mech pilots were the cream of the crop.

Luo Wei sometimes suspected that the fellow he was fighting with was actually a mutant.

The battle between Shang and Little Rock, however, was a game of wit and intelligence. Shang did it out of boredom, while Little Rock was too childish to let go of the fun.

In the end, both sides came to an unstated agreement of momentary truce, engaging in friendly battles of the physical and the mind.

Ye Chong enjoyed his life right now. To him, the most exciting thing was that he could clearly feel himself improving, which was what was happening most of the time now. Ye Chong did not imitate Luo Wei's moves exactly, but introduced changes as he saw fit, making his newly learned moves different from Luo Wei's. This was especially confounding to Luo Wei for a time. He found it hard to cope with Ye Chong's multitude of odd moves, even though they looked very familiar to him.

Ye Chong now understood Mu and Shang's intentions. If he had not put in so much effort into building a solid foundation in combat, Ye Chong would never be able to improve so much, so fast. Everything he learned before was now the stepping stone of his current transformation.

Ye Chong could feel his mind opening up to a whole new world of possibilities. He also came to realize how he should continue forward. Without a systematic learning history, he could only continue to train through actual combat and study his battle experiences to improve himself, until the day came that he could introduce his own system of combat.

That day was still far in the future, but Ye Chong was hopeful. This was the first time he could see his future so clearly. He believed that, with this clear goal in mind, he could pursue it with all he had and achieve it one day.

Han Jia continued to make acute angle direction changes like a mesmerizing wave, hoping to confuse the viewer's sight. Nonetheless, Luo Wei was immune to them. After so many days of battle, he now knew that the mech was skilled at changing directions. Suddenly, Han Jia twisted and vanished from his sight. This was when visuals failed, since it could not have as wide a range as holographic scanning systems.

Luo Wei did not panic. The Darklight mech raised the crescent blade in its right hand to the back in an elusive swing. Ding! The silver crescent was met with Han Jia's dagger. Luo Wei used the interruption to incline Darklight to its side, raising the other crescent blade and tracing another long and deadly arc in space.

Han Jia's shield came up to meet the silver crescent, while its dagger silently went for the other party's knees. Just when the silver crescent was about to hit Han Jia's shield, the expected clash did not happen, and the shield missed the blade. At the same time, a silver gleam halted Ye Chong's dagger. Ding! That was a solid clash.

They both understood that the battle had just begun.

"Ye, come back now," Shang suddenly spoke urgently to Ye Chong. Ye Chong was startled, but did not get into a fluster. Han Jia's daggers drew a few arcs in the air, keeping the Darklight mech at a distance. Han Jia suddenly retreated, turning back and fleeing from battle, leaving a stupefied Luo Wei behind. Why was the full-skeleton mech escaping today?

Soon, he received the same message from Little Rock, asking him to return to the ship.

"Shang, what is it?" Ye Chong asked. Shang would not have him return without reason.

"There, see for yourself." Shang pointed at the holographic screen.

On the holographic screen was a small starship, pursued by dozens of mechs. They were all the Sanctuary's Dawn mechs. However, the starship was as fast as the Dawn mechs themselves.

"40 Dawn mechs," Shang announced lazily.

That made four standard combat squads, since a standard Sanctuary combat squad had 10 members.

Who could possibly demand the attention of four combat squads?

The starship had obviously noticed Coxcomb. After all, Coxcomb was so massive it was impossible to miss it. The starship immediately adjusted its course and headed towards them.

"B*stards," Shang said, "They probably want us to fight against the Dawn mechs while they make their escape." Ye Chong agreed, since he would probably have done the same.

The 40 mechs seemed to notice the massive starship too, but they adjusted their course towards Coxcomb as well without hesitation.

The battle force of four combat squads was not insignificant. That was why the mech pilots acted so boldly.

As they approached, everyone was struck with a cold chill. Coxcomb may look dilapidated, but that was precisely why its electromagnetic cannons could not be concealed. The dark cannon barrels were a chilling sight.

No one expected to meet a warship here.

Shang was decidedly uninterested in the 40 Dawn mechs, but more intrigued by their target.

Shang immediately messaged the starship to enter Coxcomb, under the threat of the powerfully gleaming electromagnetic cannons directed straight at the ship.

For a mech like Shang to be so well versed in the art of threatening, Ye Chong sometimes wondered if Shang was actually not just a PSI.

The starship hesitated, but as Shang released two warning cannon shots, it obediently docked inside Coxcomb. The starship was small, but Shang opened a larger hatch for it just for laughs.

The turn of events was unexpected.

The warship looked weird, being so dilapidated, as though it had survived a great war.

The 40 mechs assessed the situation, aware of the power of the

enemy. They noticed the warship, but knew that a warship could only be as powerful as the mechs that supported it. It was not sure that the fact a warship could overcome the agility of mechs. Besides, it was obvious that this warship had been through a lot and took heavy damage.

To them, the warship was only a show.

What caught their attention was the tiny powership beside it. As a member of the Three Forces, they knew as much about Black Cove as the MPA. They knew the real purpose of the apparently tiny powership, and the strength of its crew.

Their first response was to send out a signal to call for backup. They could only be comforted by the fact that this was Cyana Galaxy, the Sanctuary's territory. Now, they could only hope that backup arrived sooner than later.

It was almost certainly a fact that the passenger inside the powership was not their peer, the Cosmic Flare. They had no idea who was in the ship, but they knew that they were no match for that person, even with their advantage in numbers.

The balance between quality and quantity is a peculiar thing. Sometimes, quantity can make up for the lack quality, and sometimes, it cannot.

Luo Wei was feeling calm. In truth, every Darklight mech pilot would know how to sabotage the enemy, and how to escape when faced with overwhelming enemy numbers. Besides, they were only 40 Dawn mechs. It would not be a problem for him, even before his vast improvement recently. The thought filled him with pride and enthusiasm.

Luo Wei quickly calmed his mind. This was the Sanctuary's territory. If he could not quickly vanquish the enemy and escape, then he must be ready to face even stronger mech pilots from the other party. Escape would not come so easily then.

With that thought in mind, Luo Wei made his decision. He slipped into Darklight and exited the powership.

As Darklight came out of the powership, all 40 mech pilots from the Sanctuary froze.

Heavens, it was a Darklight mech!

This intel was also quickly dispatched to headquarters. To their horror, the higher-ups ordered them to delay the Darklight mech pilot for as long as possible, as the higher-ups had already sent out the experts to aid them. Everyone knew how dangerous it was for a powerful enemy like this to wreak havoc in their territory.

With the orders from the higher-ups, everyone came to a calm acceptance of their assured deaths. This made them calmer, especially for the more weathered mech pilots.

Luo Wei seemed to gauge their intention, his gentle eyes now shining with a cold, deadly glare. He could not spare any more attention to that weird warship behind him now.

With two crescent blades in hand, Darklight flew towards the mechs like an elegant gentleman.

Ye Chong and Shang were completely absorbed in the starship in Coxcomb. For safety reasons, Ye Chong had slipped into Han Jia. Shang and Ye Chong went to the docking area specially made to host small starships, and approached the small starship which silently landed in there.

"Come out." Ye Chong's cold voice came out through Han Jia, resonating in the docking space.

After some seconds of silence, the starship's hatch slid open, and a person came out.

Chapter 234: Zhu Ling

She had messy short hair, with her thin and apathetic look, but her eyes were alive. Ye Chong almost feel the sharpness of her stare. Her apathetic look could not mask the strong wariness in her eyes.

"Huh?" Ye Chong could not help gasp. "Isn't that, whatshername, Shang, what was she called again?"

"Zhu Ling, Lunatic Guan's sister," Shang tsk-tsked. "What a beauty, cough, last time it was Mu outside, hehe, but now that I can take a good look at her with mine own eyes, my my, she's a beauty. Hmm, a little young, but she's well developed, I think I see her boobs coming on well ..." Shang began commenting.

Ye Chong ignored Shang's words automatically. He noticed that Zhu Ling was unarmed, and so he slipped out of Han Jia.

"You're Little Ye?" The girl gasped as she saw Ye Chong's face.

"You know me?" Ye Chong was surprised. The last time they met, he was in Guardian, and she should not have seen him before.

"My sister showed me a holographic image of you," Zhu Ling explained plainly, but the light in her eyes dimmed.

Ye Chong asked, "Where's your sister?" No one else had exited the starship.

"Dead," Zhu Ling's indifferent voice was slightly tinged with sadness. The lonely droplet shaped Red Liquor hung on her neck.

Lunatic Guan was dead? Ye Chong was reminded of a beautiful and lonely figure, leaning against the door, looking outside in a daze, often with a glass of liquor in hand.

In the end, she had found her sister. Ye Chong found himself losing interest in the details of her story. He gathered himself and asked Zhu Ling, "What do you plan to do now?"

"My sister told me that if I found you, I should stay by your side. Of course, if you think it's a bother, I'll leave," Zhu Ling spoke as though she was talking about something unrelated to herself.

Ye Chong gave it a thought and replied, "Alright, you can stay." Lunatic Guan was his teacher after all, even though she never officially announced it. That was how Ye Chong had always thought of her. This was the main reason he decided to welcome Zhu Ling.

Zhu Ling still looked expressionless, her face devoid of any signs of joy.

"What are you good at?" Ye Chong asked.

"Combat," was Zhu Ling's concise reply.

"Where's your mech?" Ye Chong asked.

"Didn't you crush it already?" Zhu Ling spoke a little sarcastically. Ye Chong remembered then that he really did crush her mech back then.

"What kind of mech do you use?" Ye Chong may not have much to offer, but he still owned quite a variety of mech models at the moment.

"Anything's fine," Zhu Ling said, "Best if it's the Sanctuary's."

Ye Chong had only a few Dawn mechs and Mu Fei's Overwing. Ye Chong took out the dimension keystones for the Dawn mech and Overwing, and said, "These are all the Sanctuary's mechs, pick one."

"Overwing?" Zhu Ling stared widely with a look of disbelief.

"You know Overwing?" Ye Chong found out what the mech was called after noticing its name carved on the mech. Ye Chong had killed the mech's previous owner in an ambush. Ye Chong had studied Overwing for a long time, but there were many things about it that he could not understand. Its structure was markedly

different from what Ye Chong knew about regular mechs, with its very own system architecture. The fact that mentalists were different from regular people made Ye Chong realize that using the mech would probably require special techniques.

"No one in the Sanctuary would not recognize Overwing." Zhu Ling did not intend to laugh at Ye Chong for his apparent idiocy, but she was still a little confused. "Why would you have Overwing? Mu Fei is well known as the master of Overwing. Did you kill him?" Zhu Ling asked, clearly surprised and suspicious.

"Yes, I killed him," Ye Chong replied plainly.

"You killed Mu Fei?" Zhu Ling studied Ye Chong's seemingly vulnerable physique. Ye Chong was not familiar with the Sanctuary, and so did not know how powerful Mu Fei actually was. He had zero understanding of the idea of being a trump card, and what a person bestowed with this title was truly capable of.

"Ambush," Ye Chong explained flatly, not embarrassed in the slightest.

Zhu Ling seemed to come to a realization. To her, that seemed to be the only way to kill a trump card of the Sanctuary.

"We should leave here," Zhu Ling said, "That Darklight mech pilot must have alerted the Sanctuary. As far as I know, Feng Su and her Wings of Nirvana are nearby, she is most likely sent here as backup."

"Feng Su and her Wings of Nirvana?" Ye Chong asked, confused. Shang was already howling in excitement, "Ah, Ye, is it Feng Su? Wah, such a gorgeous voice, and that beautiful face. Hehe, Ye, I have her exact measurements right here, would you care to ..."

Zhu Ling could not hear Shang as she replied, "Feng Su is also one of the Sanctuary's trump cards, Wings of Nirvana is her mech. Darklight mech pilots may be strong, but they will not stand a chance against the Sanctuary's trump cards."

If a Darklight mech pilot was no match against the Sanctuary's trump card, and he himself was barely even against a Darklight mech pilot, then wouldn't he be dead for sure if he face the trump card himself?

"Feng Su is that strong?" Ye Chong remembered exchanging a few blows with Feng Su in the forest where Mr Yin lived. While her moves were difficult to anticipate, he did not feel that she was as strong as Zhu Ling described. Ye Chong believed that with his current ability, he should be able to kill her.

"Of course," Zhu Ling gave Ye Chong an odd look, clearly not understanding his thoughts. She probed, "You fought with her before?"

Ye Chong nodded.

Zhu Ling found herself unable to read this student of her sister. He had fought with Feng Su before, and even killed Mu Fei in an ambush, taking Overwing for himself. This man had survived all of that.

Of course, she did not know that when Ye Chong met Mu Fei, the latter did not even have the chance of deploying his mech, and could only fight in person. Feng Su was not skilled in hand-to-hand combat, and that was why Ye Chong could escape unscathed. If Feng Su had used Wings of Nirvana, Ye Chong would have died without a proper body to show for it.

However, Ye Chong knew that Zhu Ling would not exaggerate like this. She was from the Sanctuary, and would know more about them than he. Always place importance on an expert's opinion - that was what Ye Chong had learned from his days at Aurora.

Shang asked abruptly, "Where did you get your starship?"

Zhu Ling had noticed the damaged mech with one arm from the beginning. However, the pilot had said nothing, not even coming out of the mech, and Ye Chong did not seem keen to introduce, so

she did not ask about it.

However, now that Shang suddenly spoke up, Zhu Ling did not betray any change in expression. Her years of training and planning had molded her into a person that would not lose her cool easily. Seeing Ye Chong looking at her, Zhu Ling looked back and replied, "That's stolen from a space pirate crew."

Shang's question reminded Ye Chong that her starship could fly as fast as the Dawn mechs.

Shang asked courteously, "Can you bring us to them? I believe that they must have something of interest to us."

"Alright," Zhu Ling's reply was simple.

"Ye, this girl is very much like you," Shang seemed to say that with a sigh.

"Is that right?" Ye Chong replied noncommittally.

Zhu Ling quickly pointed out the location where she stole the starship, and Shang proceeded to calculate the warp jump time.

Ye Chong asked, "Shang, are we doing this for her starship's engine?" Ye Chong recalled Shang's words and came to this conclusion.

Shang corrected him, "Wrong, Ye, we must find the creator of that starship's engine. That engine is special." It was not everyday that something could earn the remark "special" from Shang.

"Ye, I finally understand something." The way Shang talked now made Ye Chong uncomfortable.

"What?"

"No matter how powerful we are at computations, we would never be able to create as humans do. These days, as I interact often with Little Rock, I was surprised to find that humans are so much better than we are in the art of creation. And we, we can only rely on a massive database of information and run detailed

computations to arrive at our deductions. We ourselves are not capable of creation." Shang was now speaking a lot like Mu.

"You're right." Ye Chong accepted Shang's conclusion easily.

"Therefore, the only ones who can surpass humans are the humans themselves," Shang pointed out coolly, and added, "Or we will be left behind."

Ye Chong nodded. Shang's words were irrefutable.

"Ye, you may be talented, but your strength is finite, and you cannot be good in everything. We need more talent, coupled with my and Mu's vast database. With these, I believe we can become stronger. That is how we will be able to control our own destinies." Ye Chong could not deny Shang's words.

"Shang, do you mean that we need more power?" Ye Chong frowned despite himself. He was not particularly ambitious, and he disliked doing things like that.

"No, we need a team. We need members who are strong in different fields, so that we can protect ourselves," Shang explained.

Ye Chong asked, "Are we not capable of protecting ourselves now?"

Shang spoke cynically, "Seems to me that we're the ones who run away every time."

Ye Chong grew silent.

"Ye, the world is changing. The war has just begun. Ye, do you think you'll be able to live in peace anywhere in this world?" Shang asked.

"No," Ye Chong came to this conclusion after a moment's thought.

"That's right. The balance in Csebesini cannot be maintained for much longer, the peak of the war is close at hand. Ye, didn't you notice that there are more pirates than before these days? And

they're more ruthless than ever. For now, the powers of the Four Forces are precariously balanced, but this will soon cease to be. This is only the calm before the storm. Ye, we must prepare ourselves, or we will be threatened in every moment of our lives."

Ye Chong could say nothing to dispute Shang.

Shang continued, "Ye, if we have a warship so powerful that no one can avert their gaze against, then with you and me, hmm, and that girl, and a few more geniuses onboard, err, then we can make this our headquarters, hehe, and no one will be able to do anything to us."

Ye Chong nodded with determination. He never liked to hand his life over to another person. Best if he could be in control of his own life.

"Hmm, if we can do that, then we can invite Bing Bing over, Xiu is also not bad. Oh, right, and Sun Xuelin, Grandpa Qian, Mrs Rui, err, and that Rui Su is also quite good looking, I'll think about it. Ha, if we can get Feng Su here too, then it'll be perfect, hahaha ... I'll live my days with all the pretty ladies around me, what a wonderful life ..." Shang began to spiral down into his fantasies.

Ye Chong rolled his eyes. Of course the mech would return to his usual behaviour.

"Hehe, Ye, I've informed them that the Sanctuary's backup are coming. With them here, the Sanctuary will be focused on them," Shang said with an evil laugh.

As expected, Ye Chong saw that the Darklight mech was working faster now to finish off his enemies. It was clear that he was also afraid of the Sanctuary's trump card. The beautiful and fatal crescent blades flickered in space like a swords dance.

Coxcomb had already made a warp jump towards its destination. None of the mechs paid any attention to Coxcomb. The Dawn mechs' orders were to stall the Darklight mech. To them, it was

already straining to stall the Darklight mech, and they could not spare the effort to deal with the starship. Luo Wei was also ignoring Coxcomb. The way he saw it, he was already lucky enough that the ship did not destroy him first.

Zhu Ling was already making headway with Overwing. She did not understand Overwing any more than Ye Chong, and could only figure out the mech herself. Fortunately, it was still a Sanctuary's mech, and the similarities were there. As a member of the elite squad, she had already surpassed the abilities of any regular elite squad member long ago, but had kept her abilities hidden from view all this time.

She could have finished off all the Dawn mechs that were pursuing her if she had gotten herself a serviceable mech. To a mech pilot, a mech could make a difference between life and death.

Today, however, she received the surprise gift of Overwing. This was a mech that gained fame because of Mu Fei. To think that she could pilot a trump card's mech! After a brief moment of exhilaration, Zhu Ling quickly threw herself completely into familiarizing herself with the mech. Experience taught her that her strength would ultimately decide her fate, no matter the situation.

Zhu Ling's insane training surprised Ye Chong. However, he quickly got over it. He would have done the same. In any case, Ye Chong hoped that his comrades would at least be able to defend themselves.

On the other hand, Shang was trying his best to locate the space pirates that Zhu Ling had met.

Chapter 235: Lian Yue

Hei De was vexed. Ever since he took over the pirate crew not long ago, all sorts of problems sprang out. Two days ago, they lost a ship to a thief, and he was only informed much later by an underling. This frustrated him to no end, since that starship was the one modified by that crazy guy, to be used for his own safety. Now they had lost a ship for no apparent reason, and it was so d*mn frustrating.

They were pirates, and they were robbed. What a f*cking joke. He dared not spread the word, however. If the pirates knew about this, he would become the butt of their jokes.

Just when he was about to search for his beloved evacuation ship, he saw that exact ship flying past him and his crew. However, Hai De did not move even a muscle.

That was because his stolen starship was keenly pursued by dozens of mechs flying behind it. Heavens, weren't those the Sanctuary's mechs? If any of Cyana Galaxy's space pirates do not recognise the Sanctuary, then they might as well kill themselves first. The Sanctuary was now the true ruler of Cyana Galaxy.

Could he or she be the Sanctuary's wanted fugitive? Hai De thought with dismay. He could only pray that the Sanctuary did not blame him for the starship. He was at least aware of how his crew would fare against them.

The matter had troubled him for days, and he was having trouble sleeping, his eyes wide open at night. The boss was not in a good mood, and the underlings stayed out of trouble for the most part. These days, the pirates behaved, careful not to provoke his ire.

Fortunately, the Sanctuary made no move against them. Hence, Hai De became more cheerful, and approved another "hunting trip". Bored from his past few days of hiding, Hai De decided to lead the hunt himself.

It seemed that their back luck was over, as their hunt was particularly fruitful. The loot from a mid sized trading fleet would not only replenish their supplies, but also provide them with more mechs to strengthen their crew.

"As expected, surviving a great disaster would lead to good fortune ..." Hai De mused to himself.

However, before he was done musing, he came to realize how when one was at the peak of happiness, disaster would follow.

A dilapidated warship suddenly appeared before the space pirates. Heavens, a warship! Aside from the Sanctuary, no one had heard of anyone else owning a warship. Even the largest pirate crews only have their own starships. Even if they have a warship, they would not dare to show it to the world. These days, the arrogant ones died faster.

In fact, Hai De did not think much of this warship. It moved so slowly likely a turtle, and looked heavily damaged. However, a warship was still a warship. The cannon barrels were a constant reminder to Hai De that the other party was not to be messed with.

"Was it the Sanctuary? Black Cove? The MPA? The Freedom Alliance?" All the major powers came to mind, but the warship did not look like any of them. Even so, he treaded very carefully.

Of course they would give way, this was a warship! Who would dare to mess with someone who dared to fly a warship in the Sanctuary's territory? Hai De yelled hastily at his underlings - a few of the pirate ships were still anchored in the way.

The warship did not leave, but was heading straight towards them.

Hai De instantly felt that something was wrong. Was it trying to rob them? Robbing their own?

Just then, one of his underlings came to report panickedly, "Boss, bad news ... Bad news, they want to speak with you personally."

Just then, one of the pirate ships was blasted into smithereens with a thick blue beam. All the pirates froze in place, afraid to attract attention to themselves and become the next target.

The fire from the explosion illuminated Hai De's pallor.

Ye Chong could not be bothered with the details. He left it all to Shang. This kind of intimidation act was always Shang's favourite. Ye Chong believed that no one would lie when facing Shang.

The way Ye Chong saw it, instead of wasting time here, he should be spending time on his training. Zhu Ling was completely absorbed in her training, not concerning herself with other affairs. Compared to Ye Chong, she seemed to have a more systematic training regime. Besides, she was getting used to maneuvering Overwing, and this made her even more devoted to her training. As an elite squad member, she was definitely capable, and Overwing allowed her to showcase her strengths even more.

Ye Chong would sometimes watch her train. The mech's wings that would never move under his piloting now came to life in Zhu Ling's hands, performing some inexplicable feats. However, it was Overwing's powerful movements that truly surprised Ye Chong. It moved so fast that it could even surpass Han Jia. The thought of obtaining such a powerful mech but unable to use it himself was frustrating.

Nevertheless, Ye Chong quickly got over it. The wiser way forward would be to make full use of all available resources at his disposal.

He wondered what Shang was doing to that poor leader of the pirates now. He seemed to be howling and shouting even more pitifully than that Mr Yin from last time.

What Ye Chong should do now was to organize his findings from his days training with the Darklight pilot, and train himself long enough that those new insights become part of himself.

Ye Chong's training was finally interrupted. He knew it must be a result of Shang's triumph.

When Shang brought a young man into Coxcomb, Ye Chong asked plainly, "Is this the guy?"

Shang gave a laugh and said, "Should be him. I didn't expect him to be such a handsome man, hehehe. Ye, worry not, I've verified his identity ..."

Bam! Shang let go, and the young man fell straight down, slamming straight into solid ground. He quickly stood up, and the first thing he did after was to check if his clothing was dirtied. He adjusted his clothing, looking unperturbed.

The guy's physique was alright, seeing that he was unharmed from his long fall to the ground.

If anything, he looked like an eyesore. If not for his flat chest, Ye Chong would have thought he was actually of the opposite sex. His delicate eyes gleamed oddly, or seductively, using Shang's vocabulary. His skin was smooth and like a lady's, and his features were well balanced. If he wore a lady's garments, no one would suspect him to be a man.

He ran his fingers along his golden hair. Fortunately, Ye Chong was steady enough to not openly gape at him.

The man finally realized Ye Chong's presence, and gasped, "Ah, handsome, I didn't think there'd be someone handsome here, I like it." He stepped swiftly to Ye Chong, his delicate eyes studying Ye Chong carefully, his slender fingers making to give Ye Chong a warm welcome.

Just when his fingers barely touched Ye Chong, Ye Chong's made a move with his right hand, and the man was back at Shang's feet like a sandbag.

Ye Chong asked Shang, "You're sure this is the one?"

Shang gave another laugh. "He's called Lian Yue, an interesting

person."

Ye Chong was indifferent. "Do what you have to." He then casually made his way to the alchemist laboratory.

Just then, Lian Yue looked up from the floor, his face full of disbelief and he spoke, "You, you would really hit me?"

Just then, Zhu Ling exited the mech training room. She was drenched in sweat, and her tight-fitting combat uniform accentuated her body's curves. Sweat rolled down along her cheeks to her sharp chin, and dripped down to the floor. Her face was blushing from her vigorous exercise, making her even more attractive.

Zhu Ling took a glance at Lian Yue on the ground. Of course, it was a short glance.

"Wah, a beauty! Is this heaven? There's a handsome man and a beautiful lady. Hey beauty, wait ..." Lian Yue moved so deftly like he was not hurt at all, quickly making his way before Zhu Ling, his face wearing an expression of flattery as he held onto Zhu Ling's hands. "My beauty ..."

Zhu Ling glared coldly at the guy who appeared out of nowhere. She planted a heavy right kick into his abdomen, sending him back to Shang's feet even faster than the last time.

Zhu Ling did not look back at him as she returned to her room.

A long moment passed before Lian Yue finally lifted his face, looking very sorrowful and full of disbelief. "You, you would hit me too?"

To Lian Yue, this was a most memorable occasion. All this while, he had always been fawned upon due to his looks, and no one had ever really hit him. Today, however, he was hit, twice. Truly, this was a heavy blow to both his body and soul.

Nonetheless, when Lian Yue saw the metals laboratory and modification room, his eyes shone as brightly as when Ye Chong

and Zhu Ling when they first saw them. The look on his face when he caressed those world class instruments was enough to make Ye Chong cringe and leave the laboratory.

Shang spent his days with Lian Yue in deep discussions. One could hear the occasional lewd laughter resonating about the Coxcomb, as the starship finally lived up to its name.

However, this became a problem for Hai De and his pirate crew. The warship had essentially anchored itself at their base, and seemed reluctant to leave. The pirates were all anxious. While they had the advantage in numbers, Hai De knew that his underlings were just a motley crew, all scared to death. Besides, who knew what was inside the warship? It could be a full army of mechs. Best if they be cautious.

As for his meeting with the one-armed mech, it was hellish. He would prefer to never relive it ever again.

Chapter 236: Reorganization I

Lian Yue was a genius in mechanics - such was Shang's conclusion. Rarely did Shang offer such high praise for any one person, so Lian Yue must be the real thing. Ye Chong no longer concerned himself with Coxcomb's engines. Better to let the expert onboard handle it rather than someone amateur like him.

Ye Chong was trying to figure out how to improve Han Jia. While Han Jia performed well, it was only on par with Darklight. Shang mentioned that there were many other more powerful mechs. More importantly, Ye Chong noticed the disparity between Overwing and Han Jia.

This made Ye Chong feel a great sense of urgency and danger.

Ye Chong believed that full-skeleton mechs could do so much more, and there should be space for improvement. For starters, the mech should have better automotive power. Without a good engine, Ye Chong would be limited in the mech. Han Jia was now using the engine from Yu Di. In fact, the engine had performed well, but compared to Overwing, it was still not good enough.

Speed was crucial, often deciding the fate of the mech pilot.

However, this was not an easy problem to solve. Ye Chong was not familiar with engines. It was an entirely different field for him.

In other aspects, like the mech's structure, reaction speed and protective armor, Ye Chong could offer more improvements. In reality, Black Cove's mechs were the simplest amongst the Three Forces. However, this did not mean that they were less powerful, since that was a matter of the mech's battle capacity.

Ye Chong's experience fighting with the Darklight mech told him that experts were more well versed with their weapons. The Darklight mech had blocked almost all of his own attacks with that pair of crescent blades. Ye Chong's strategy was decidedly different

- he would often block attacks with different parts of his mech. This was related to the training he grew up with. On the trash planet, before he found Mu and Shang, all his combat strategies were self taught from experience. They continued to heavily influence him today. Luo Wei, on the other hand, received training from Black Cove's system since young, so he was already used to that combat strategy.

To Ye Chong, after a certain level of proficiency, mech pilots would be differentiated by their physical prowess and combat insights. Advanced mechs moved faster, and required advanced maneuvering skills. The stress on the human body would also be heavier. For example, Han Jia's high speed abrupt direction adjustments could squash the heart of an ordinary mech pilot.

Hand speed was also another factor. When a mech changed course, the mech pilot must be able to enter the commands fast enough. In reality, this was an important barrier that prevented mech pilots from advancing further.

Of course, these were all skills. Having them did not mean that the mech pilot was excellent. Making the right calls based on the circumstances, predicting the opponent's next step, quick strategizing for battle and so on were all inner qualities of a good mech pilot.

Ye Chong possessed all these qualities. His body was strong, and he had never really reached his physical limit. At least, Ye Chong never had any bad experience from piloting mechs. As for Ye Chong's hand speed, it was mostly the mechs he used that limited his piloting. Ye Chong would only move his hands at his fastest when in danger, and often in those cases, he would find his mech unable to keep up with him.

In terms of skills, Ye Chong possessed enough of them to warrant him for a more advanced mech.

However, Ye Chong could not for the moment think of any other

mech better than Han Jia that was suitable for him, other than the ones from Black Cove.

Would Black Cove give one to him? That would be laughable. Black Cove would not negotiate, but Ye Chong himself was also not someone keen in using words to solve problems. If there was any way to procure a Black Cove advanced level mech, Ye Chong would definitely strive to achieve it. However, Black Cove was too strong for him.

For some reason, he had offended all of the Three Forces. It seemed that only the Freedom Alliance was the only power that he was not involved with.

Ye Chong shook his head and dismissed all these impractical ideas. Better for him to make his own modifications on Han Jia. It was a pity that the mech was limited by its skeleton materials. Skeletons were in some sense a one-time material - once it was shaped, there was not much room for adjustments.

If Ye Chong was not satisfied with Han Jia, he would have to redesign and rebuild the mech. He still had many skeletons materials, and most of them of high quality, with excellent properties. After such a long time, he had many new ideas. However, without a good engine, all of them would be worthless.

In the end, Ye Chong reluctantly set aside his project.

These days, Lian Yue seemed to have received some kind of shock. Every day, he would stare sharply at the holographic screen with reddened eyes, mostly in a trance. Ye Chong took a glance, and found the holographic screen to be filled with all sorts of engine schematics.

Lian Yue would occasionally laugh madly, his handsome features distorted into a pitiful state. Even his gleaming, delicate eyes were now often in a daze. Saliva would drip from the edge of his mouth without him noticing.

The man was obviously not normal. Aside from Shang occasionally entering the room, Ye Chong and Zhu Ling kept away from him. Fortunately, whether it was the mech or the humans onboard Coxcomb, they were all psychologically strong, else the intermittent eerie laughters coming from metals laboratory would have scared the living daylights out of them.

Ye Chong considered his next steps.

First, he must fix Coxcomb's engines, or they would not be able to go anywhere. Now, he must wait for Shang to lay out the general reparation and modification plans.

Ye Chong believed that Lian Yue was definitely capable, but he also knew that what Shang had in his database was very little compared to the vast amount of information available in the Five Galaxies. No matter how good Lian Yue was, he might not be able to do much in the meantime.

As for how Shang managed to convince him to cooperate, Ye Chong believed it would not be an issue. No one understood better than him of Shang's prowess in the realm of psychology. In this field, Shang was definitely far superior than Ye Chong. Ye Chong did not know what Shang had offered to Lian Yue, but he would not waste time to find out more.

Once Coxcomb was repaired, Ye Chong planned to head straight to planet Ming Hong, and find out the truth about Papa.

Chapter 237: Reorganization II

Shang finally came up with the warship's modification and restoration plans.

However, when Ye Chong examined the huge schematics, even his strong mental fortitude gave way. This was not modification and restoration, this was rebuilding the warship from ground up. The last time Ye Chong installed the electromagnetic cannons and the laser guns, he was thoroughly exhausted. This new project would take Ye Chong at least a few years to complete.

Shang seemed to be able to read Ye Chong's mind, and laughed as he explained, "Ye, no need for you to do the work yourself this time, hehe, we have all the labour we need."

Starships were necessary for the space pirates for transport. Almost all pirate bases would have at least a few shipyards, with plenty of capable technicians. Besides, with Lian Yue hanging around the place for so long, he knew exactly who could be "convinced" to help.

Hai De's base was well equipped with relevant facilities. Since they were only a small pirate crew, they could not afford to continuously buy advanced mechs from smugglers. Besides, the loots they acquired varied - sometimes it would be something like ores, worthless to their buyers, but a waste to be thrown away. Hai De chose to spend some money on metal forging equipment to make some of their own tools. Nevertheless, they lacked the necessary talent, and rarely needed the metal goods anyway, so the ore were mostly kept in their stowage area, accumulating over time. Fortunately, their base was spacious enough, and Hai De need not worry about it.

Now, though, all these equipment were taken by Shang; even the ores were all removed. Hai De was extremely cautious of the one-armed mech. Moreover, the ores were worthless to him, being kept

for long at their base and taking up space. Hence, he agreed to hand them over without hesitation.

Shang also had a list of names given by Lian Yue to him, all of them pirates who would serve as good labour. The list was a problem to Hai De, since many of the people mentioned were bad tempered. He feared that some of them would kick up a fuss and raise havoc.

Just then, two mechs flew out of the dilapidated warship.

Hai De flicked his gaze towards them. This was his first time seeing mechs other than the one-armed mech from the warship. At the sight of the two mechs, Hai De's eyes widened in horror. His face contorted, blood draining from his cheeks, and his legs trembled.

When the one-armed mech was finally done talking, Hai De quickly took the list with him and vanished out of sight.

Noticing Hai De's shock, Shang touched where his one arm ended abruptly and after a long moment, finally spoke bitterly, "I may be one-armed, but I'm not really one-armed!" Once, there was a movie called One-armed Soldier that was so captivating it became an instant classic, marking the beginning of an era of movies featuring gay characters. As a movie fan, Shang did his research in these subjects.

Hai De's mind was now completely occupied by a single thought - the clown mech! It was the clown mech! That funny looking colourful clown-like mech was a symbol of death and despair. The one the space pirates called Clown of Darkness that walked between the shadows, was the mech that killed the pirate leader and escaped unscathed despite all the security measures - a super assassin.

The clown mech was a hot topic amongst the space pirates.

"Heavens, why am I so unlucky, to meet this legendary dangerous

character?" Hai De groaned to himself.

He also finally knew what the warship was called - Coxcomb. To think that Coxcomb was actually a warship. Hai De suddenly remembered that since the Clown of Darkness and Coxcomb were here, then that Blue Ray of Death super sniper mech pilot should also be here. He did not recall seeing the mech though. On the other hand, the mech with the strange wings beside the clown mech did not match the legend - wasn't the Blue Ray of Death armed with a huge sniper energy rifle?

"Wait a moment, energy gun?" Hai De recalled that the one-armed mech had a huge energy gun slung on its back. He shuddered and nearly tripped himself.

Blue Ray of Death ... Could that guy be the Blue Ray of Death? Hai De felt like he was living a dream - not a good one, but the mother of nightmares. Hai De swallowed heavily. These two characters were not known to be merciful. He should tread with care, or else ... He felt around his throat with his fingers, as though he could feel a chill cutting across.

Ye Chong and Zhu Ling exited Coxcomb because the modification works were too extensive, and it was getting very uncomfortable inside. Lian Yue still holed up in the metals laboratory, enduring the loud noise around him as he worked non-stop everyday for some unknown project. Ye Chong grew a little respectful of his determination, even though he was not interested in whatever project he was up to.

For safety reasons, Ye Chong and Zhu Ling exited the warship in their mechs. Han Jia was a touchy subject, so Ye Chong decided to use Puppet in the end. He was not aware that the word of the clown mech and the Blue Ray of Death had already spread out far and wide even though it was only recent news.

As Puppet appeared, Ye Chong noticed curiously that the people busily working around suddenly stopped and looked at him with

terrified eyes. Clangclangclang! Heavy objects fell to the ground, and the men quickly picked up what they had dropped and scattered away, like they were running for their lives.

Ye Chong looked at their reactions curiously, unable to understand.

In just one day, the clown mech and the Blue Ray of Death became the dominating topic of conversation for Hai De's pirate crew. No one dared to step within 100 meters of Ye Chong. As for Shang, his constant movement around the base made all the pirates extra nervous. The days went by with nerve crushing intensity. Shang quickly noticed the fact - nasty as he was, he realised this was actually quite fun. Hence, for the time being, the pirates spent the followings days in absolute fear.

This had the unexpected result of greater labour efficiency. The pirates worked so hard that Ye Chong thought they looked like they were building their own warship.

Shang had divided the warship modification works into many tiny compartments, such that the pirates would ever only know what they did themselves, and not what their comrades were doing.

Ye Chong and Zhu Ling had already made themselves familiar with the pirate base. The base was well concealed from unwanted attention. The main entrance was hidden within a large valley. If the pirates had not led the way, Ye Chong believed that he might not be able to find it.

"This base is not bad," the thought came unbidden to Ye Chong's mind. If he installed some firepower here, then it would be a very good defensive position. A well-concealed and well-defended base was hard to find. Besides, while the space pirate here were not so strong, they obviously had a long history in this place. This was apparent from the construction of the base. The base was a large hole dug out of the ground. While it was not as magnificent as Nine

Gates of Daylight, it was still quite impressive. It took a lot of work to build this place. Ye Chong estimated it to be the combination of effort from at least a few generations of space pirates.

Ye Chong was always on the move - from galaxy to galaxy, or from planet to planet. At some level, Ye Chong, Mu and Shang were just like the space pirates.

"If only I have my own base," Ye Chong suddenly had this thought.

Ye Chong may not realise it, but this thought was a step forward in his mindset. He was finally starting to be more proactive in facing this chaotic world.

Unfortunately, Ye Chong did not pursue that thought. It was only a sudden thought, one that he quickly abandoned. "Best to leave this kind of vexing problems to Shang," thought Ye Chong. He scanned the area, assuring himself that there was no danger nearby.

Zhu Ling flew in Overwing, following the clown mech from behind. Its light green wings made it look like a green bird. The mech danced easily in the sky, moving in the hands of an expert pilot as it trailed behind the clown mech, looking all too comfortable with itself.

Ye Chong could only feel jealous of her. The clown mech was worlds away from Overwing's standards. Seeing Zhu Ling flying Overwing made him feel threatened. Ye Chong dared not imagine how Overwing would be like with Mu Fei in the pilot cabin. He felt lucky that Mu Fei was not in Overwing when he tried to kill him.

It was obvious then that no matter how capable a mech pilot was, he or she would still be vulnerable without a mech. The best way to kill a mech pilot was to do it before he or she slipped into a mech.

Finished with their survey of the area, Ye Chong and Zhu Ling

prepared to return. Just then, Ye Chong suddenly heard Shang speaking, "Ye, come back quick, hehe ..." Shang sounded overjoyed.

Ye Chong did not hesitate. The clown mech made a graceful turn in the sky and headed straight for the pirate base, with Overwing close behind.

Chapter 238: Reorganization III

It's an engine - that was what Ye Chong identified at first glance. The circuit partially visible over the silvery main body, the seamless arc, the condensed structure, those were the charmer in Ye Chong's eyes. He was not that well-versed in engine expertise, but it would not stop him from loving this particular engine. He was convinced, utterly convinced, of the liveliness running deep down in the thumping mechanical arteries on the entity, although it might be a mere glance he took.

"Shang, where is this from exactly?" Ye Chong was feeling peculiar. Anyone would have felt peculiar if one hefty thing suddenly popped out of nowhere, especially when this was not an engine for mechs, rather it was for spaceships.

"Oh my Ye..." Lian Yue seductively approached, "This? You like this? It's my masterpiece, you like it? If you like it, I could g-i-v-e it to you. Only for you, as I am... well... hmm... for you." His eyes were lustrous with an alluring glow.

"I prefer guns," flatly he replied, which shattered the loving expression on the handsome face of Lian Yue. "Oh?!" He was stunned at first, then his eyes burst with a blazing passion as they looked upon Ye Chong endearingly. If one were to give a close observation at the features of Lian Yue, one could see some unknown liquid tainting the corner of his slightly opened lips. Ye Chong was finding this anomaly somehow bizarre to him. It almost felt as if a carnivore was eyeing its prey.

The bizarreness sent chills to his spine, goosebumps lumped over his skin. This guy has some issues...

Disregarding the peculiarity, he shifted his attention back onto the engine.

Shang then introduced, "Ye, this is Lian Yue's reworked design on the engine in accordance with the blueprint found in my

databank. Even though the engine is 10% less efficient than the MPA main warship unit, the required materials to build this engine has become much more less demanding, which could be replaced by most common materials. Theoretically it is also more agile in making turns. Well, this is the first product we have developed, fresh from the oven, we still need a test drive for this."

Ye Chong's large eyes swung over Lian Yue at the side. I never expected this strange person to be so skillful! I have seen the print Mu Shang provided before, those lines and circles were as if heavenly sent for me, I could not even identify where the exhaust was located.

Ye Chong had the talent and skill in technical field, so he could naturally understand what the strange guy had achieved. The strange guy should have a great foundation in his skills and a daring personality to attempt the new, for he was able to gain senses over all the design plans while giving them the necessary tweaks to renew the design. The creativity was something really uncommonly precious to Ye Chong. It only took an engine and 3 minutes for Lian Yue to ascend as one of the greatest persons in Ye Chong's mind. Ye Chong was one believer of strength speaking louder than words after all and the strength Lian Yue demonstrated was more than enough to win over his respect.

And Lian Yue stood there proudly.

Zhu Ling's expression remained unchanged, although the emotion was brewing inside her. She had not been exposed to the components of a warship, but she could tell so much just from seeing that mech with missing arm alone. She speculated and wondered, "A technique of MPA? Where in the 5 galaxies they got this? And this person with questionable gender was actually a super expert? I mean the person would have gotten the Master title in the Sanctuary with such craftsmanship.

Provided that her sister had not shown Ye Chong's face clearly on the projection Zhu Ling once was given, Zhu Ling would have

suspected that Ye Chong was in fact an apprentice under her sister's teaching. Those two were the mysterious. The pilot of that handicapped mech had never left the cabin. This is too weird, I could not imagine a pilot living inside a mech for almost eternity. He is living inside, I had never seen him coming out for food or hydration...

And the potency that Ye Chong demonstrated had gone beyond her sister's description.

Her head was rumbling yet her mouth was sealed tight, as experience advised her to stay silent at all cost. That unnecessary curiosity of hers would only make her death worse. Being as alert as Ye Chong, she remained silent.

Lian Yue was passionate towards both Ye Chong and Zhu Ling, but strangely he acted as if he saw a black hole when it came to Shang. He would suddenly become docile and kind, which Ye Chong really wondered what Shang had done to the strange kind. But whenever he inquired Shang regarding this, "Hehehehehehe!" Shang would unleash a kind of incomprehensible grin.

The engine was called "Gandhanra". The name was given by its creator, Lian Yue. The concept of this naming was apparently based on a myth from the ancients where there was one goddess whose appearance was beautiful and angelic, captivating and loving. Whenever she glided past the sky, petals of flowers would shower the ground as the gorgeous symphony for the angels would be rung. Shang, the poet of the team, was extremely satisfied towards the given name. So the engine retained its exotic name.

The largest shipyard at the pirates' base was filled with busy engineering units flying around, where sometimes the bright light of laser welding could be discerned. The site was livelier than ever, which people at first glance would have assumed it being some major construction happening under the sponsorship of a large company. The workers were working hard, sweating blood,

dripping life, without a rant, without a word. The blood and sweat were to keep their life. These works were nothing compared to their own life.

The progression was rapider than Ye Chong had expected, as he was a little unsettled when he was informed that the ship had been completed.

Right before the newborn gigantic craft the group of pirates stood tidily in a row. They were viewing, they were observing, but they did not seem to be at ease. Their expression told worries and agitation as if they were facing the ultimate enemy on their final cruise.

Shang made a quick inspection on the entire warship. The construction had been completed. To ensure airtight confidentiality he actually broke the whole construction into different parts and let the pirates to take each of them. So what the pirates were fearing was Shang's inspection on their work performance, where there could be consequences for the underperformed works.

The clown mech was leading the entire team, where its members feared to even lift their eyes upon. Their stares were illustrating the clown mech as if the reaper with spears rather than a machine.

Men would only be left with frailness after they lost their bravery.

Regarding that winged mech right next to the clown, it was something that no one would dare to look down upon, despite its ridiculous appearance had been an ongoing subject brought up the pirates during their mundane cruise. Well it was evident for the winged mech was being able to stand right next to the notorious clown killer. No one would believe that it was claimed to be harmless.

"Mhm." Shang pondered, "Pass." The syllable was the most gorgeous tone the pirates believed they had ever heard in their life,

where a loud sigh of relief could be heard in the shipyard.

Ye Chong was really curious of the Coxcomb's appearance after the makeover since he was absent throughout the construction. Shang was the director of everything.

"Go!"

Under Shang's call, every pirate got onto the engineering mechs and started moving again, as they rose like a swarm of bees, flying towards the supporting stand.

"Pull!"

And the support was dismantled into million pieces which the pirates dropped to the side right after.

The Coxcomb had been reborn, with a brand new appearance.

Chapter 239: Reorganization IV

The long body of the ship exerted a kind of personality of the MPA. Unlike his former hefty body, the Coxcomb had undergone a successful diet, where his length had been reduced to 3 kilometers, with a flatter, condensed appearance and two supportive engines at both sides to achieve agility.

The dark crimson body was not the result of normal painting, rather it was finished with a particular kind of alloys which mostly were made out of the uncommon mineralites Ye Chong had collected over the course. The bright red alloy was tainted by the color of black gold in the end, thus the darkened hue. Shang said such type of alloy was quite above the standard for it would have superior performance in defending against energy-based firing. Under most circumstances, such alloy would only be found in the shield of advanced mech models. But Ye Chong had an inventory full of the necessary mineralites, so Shang just dumped the choices into the pot and coated the entire body of the ship with it.

It would probably take 3 electromagnetic firings on the same exact spot from the MPA in order to have a chance to penetrate the armor.

As expected from a warship, its body contained a much more seamless design which reduced the air friction providing an amazing performance even when traveling within the atmosphere. Moreover, they had a masterpiece from a master craftsman, namely Gandhanra the exclusive engine. Ye Chong started to get excited over the ship's capability on the move. No aperture could be identified on the body. The entire weaponry, including the lids, had been concealed. And Shang reported that they had actually further strengthened the offense of the ship, where the number of electromagnetic cannons had been increased to 88 along with additional installments of the laser firing units. Shang believed he could slaughter any reckless pilot who dared to approach the

Coxcomb in his or her mech with the help of his 500 laser firing units.

The pirates seemed to be truly exhilarated as they had been mesmerized by the appearance of the Coxcomb at first sight. It had the most low-profiled design yet it was so eye-catching at the same time. They could not lift their eyes away. Weaponry-wise they had yet witnessed the power of the guns and cannons in action, but judging by the strong respect coming from Ye Chong and Shang towards the weaponry, they were fully convinced that the ship would be an ultimate killing machine. They were feeling proud since obviously it was the outcome of their handwork over the past few days - although none of them owned the ship.

The letters of the "COXCOMB" were not visible within the dark red body, yet they would be glaring at you the moment you switched on the lights, as they stood pompously at the front of the ship, along with the oversized illustration of a beauty Shang painted at the side. "Kekekekekeke!" Ye Chong was finding the beauty in her suggestive posture to be rather familiar. After a moment of searching the similar image in his head, the beauty turned out to be Feng Su from the Sanctuary.

The posture was a nose-bleeding choice while her expression was enticing as her body curved into something that men could feel their arteries hardened upon sight.

"Kekekeke!" Chuckled the artificial indulgence in distorted mechanical voice, "Ye, this is made based on actual data alright? I still could remember the time when I fully scanned and analyzed every spot of her data, trying to re-sculpture this beauty in the posture I had always wanted. Kek! Not too shabby isn't it? Her curves."

Zhu Ling was going to roll her eyes but she was so lazy that she just gave a disdainful glance. I never knew this pilot on the mech could be this disgusting, shameless and low! Although I must admit the illustration was pretty good, I had seen Feng Su in

person before, well not in such look. And the illustration had actually captured Feng Su's charm and depicted it vividly in her moves. Thought Zhu Ling.

Ye Chong, as usual, showed ignorance towards Shang's rhetorical question as he got onto the clown mech and boarded the Coxcomb first.

The interior of the Coxcomb seemed to have received a major reorganization. The inner structure had been extremely strengthened, which had narrowed the accommodating space. Well it was still more than enough to take everyone on board.

In the gaze of the pirates, the Coxcomb finally departed! Well of course, the Coxcomb had been fully supplied with necessary resources before departure. Hai De could feel his insides dying as he bade a silent farewell at the resources of the entire base when he was moving boxes and boxes of them onboard. What an ironic torture.

At least the trouble was going to leave! Hope rose like the morning sun high in the heart of every pirate, "Before we go, according to our terms and conditions..." Shang was beeping something horrible, a gag order precisely speaking, it was so threatening that the pirates almost had an urge to sew their mouths for the rest of their life, they really feared of the forbidden secrets coming out from the mouth carelessly.

Ye Chong, once he got back to his own spaceship, started to get busy again. He first headed into the alchemy lab, as the supply of Beauty's Secretion was nearly depleted since the last war, so he got to undergo another round of mass-production.

Lian Yue, on the other hand, took a sweet dive into the metallurgy lab and modification room. "The two rooms are mine, thank you very much," he stated sassily. Zhu Ling retained her stern training routine. Lian Yue would be a super workaholic when he lost his head over his invention but he spent his free time with

Zhu Ling whenever he got some, as he would act like a kitten growling around her. Zhu Ling was annoyed to the other end of the galaxy of course, as she imagined Lian Yue in countless pieces if he ever did that on her territory.

Lian Yue absolutely had as much interest on Ye Chong, well... till the one time a dagger slid through his fragile grimace and tightly struck on the door. Lian Yue had been missing in front of Ye Chong ever since.

The Coxcomb carried on sailing smoothly, with the destination being the Rainbow planet in the Fal galaxy. Gandhanra was as superior as expected, as Shang carried out all sorts of acceleration test and turning test, which the outcome impressed Ye Chong. The Coxcomb had forsaken his former sluggish self and had become an acrobat in the space. Ye Chong could not imagine the foe locking on the Coxcomb on a rampage.

"Ye. Come over. Fast," interrupted Shang, when Ye Chong was producing Beauty's Secretion.

The few words of Shang had summoned everyone to the captain's room.

The largest projectors in the room were projecting two Dawn mechs chasing a powership. Ye Chong recognized the powership. It was the ship piloted by that Darklight Pilot. Few days back he had been fighting with the pilot continuously, so its imagery had been imprinted in his head.

"Wait, 2 Dawns?" Ye Chong was skeptical of what he saw, as the sight was ridiculous with two substandard Dawn mechs chasing a powership containing one of the most skillful pilots who - contrary to his expectation - was running gracelessly.

"Nothing strange," Zhu Ling seemed to have gotten Ye Chong's implication. "That Pilot of Darklight should have been defeated by Feng Su."

The overhaul the Coxcomb had undergone was so major that the two Dawn mechs and powership could not recognize as they accelerated, assuming him to be a random passerby.

"Given that the Pilot of Darklight was not piloting the ship, it should be Little Rock inside," stated Shang. "Ye, why don't we save him? He's quite good you know."

"Good?"

"Right. He's a genius in calculation."

"Genius?" Lian Yue who was standing by Zhu Ling snorted, "Such convenience, we would soon see geniuses sold in different packs at the local convenience store soon. Like when did genius become so common that a random person zooming in the space could be one? I ca-"

"Shhh..."

Something on the projection caught Ye Chong's attention.

Chapter 240: It's All the Beauty's Fault!

Powership was not that inferior in race with mechs but one could clearly see piloting-wise the two Dawn mechs were much better than the powership, as they were traveling in recurring curves, trying to pounce upon Little Rock.

Yet they failed.

Little Rock's performance was a shocker.

The 2 Dawn mechs, being unable to finish their prey, tried their deadly best to pin the nuisance down as they attempted several times of neutralizing the ship by smashing from both sides.

The reason Ye Chong got astounded by Little Rock's performance was because he was able to escape from each grip despite his second-class piloting skills.

Whenever the two Dawn mechs were approaching him from both sides, the powership would act like a little fish on detection as it squeezed out of the tiny aperture it found.

The happening also astonished Zhu Ling, since it was considered pretty rare to see a non-combat member being able to remain unharmed throughout the chase by 2 Dawn mechs.

Zzzzzt! Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzt!

The projection was then flooded by countless ever-changing data streams. Ye Chong's face flexed, as judging by that one moment of what he saw, the escape routes of powership could have been completely blocked, remaining one single chance to run away by flight. Shang then illustrated the escape route with a red line on the map, "Theoretically, this is the one and only escape path. Anywhere else the ship would bump into the mechs again," stated Shang and anyone could have imagined the fate of the unarmed ship by then.

Ye Chong understood the fact that it was Shang who added the

flooding data streams on the screen, while that escape route was the result of his intensive calculation in the briefest time possible.

Well only Ye Chong understood the intention of the projection, since he was highly sensitive towards data streams after deploying the Guardian for some time. That was why he got it in one glance, while his rapport with Shang affirmed his deduction.

Almost immediately after Shang had drawn the red line, Little Rock started traveling exactly on the line, as he made out from another grip from the two mechs.

This would be a perfect runaway. Ye Chong tried imagining himself in Little Rock's shoes, he believed that he could not be as perfect as Little Rock if he were to pilot that ship. It was not something he aced in, impeccable accuracy in immediate calculation.

Little Rock was a genius in fact, for he was able to perform such complicated calculation in such short amount of time. He's intelligent!

The 2 Dawn mechs did not seem to be in a hurry however, as the prey they were hunting turned out to be quite entertaining to their taste. They tried forming another grip afterwards, gently and leisurely.

Little Rock - who seemed to have noticed the Coxcomb at one point - made a sharp turn and flew towards the Coxcomb.

The turn he made attracted the attention of both Dawn mechs over that strange spaceship as its color turned out to be rather refreshing, which they, of course, were unafraid of. Those who probably went jumping around in their cabin would be the real coxcombs upon seeing the illustration on the ship, while the pilots of the Dawn mechs were some bums from some countryside called the Sanctuary. Seeing the silhouette of a person painted on the ship, they were unimpressed.

The two Sanctuary pilots were showing sympathy towards this pretty good-looking spaceship, since it would be eviscerated soon once the powership got there. Well, future plan aside, it would be more important to seize that powership before it went to somewhere else. They seriously never expected the powership to be this peculiar in movements. The pilots once assumed the powership was piloted averagely but somehow it always managed to squeeze out from their grip.

What a weird boat.

The 2 Dawn mechs passed the dark crimson spaceship by. The heavenly appearance of the absolute beauty struck upon them.

It was a relief that the dark red spaceship had yet taken an action. They were already prepared for their next grip, while handing their final salutation towards the pilot of the powership. They could feel the wisdom in Feng Su's order by then. She was great for she was visionary. Such non-combat member, once seized, would be way stronger than a bunch of mechs if they used him at the right place.

Wait, Feng Su? Hmm... Something seemed to have flashed in their mind. Master Feng Su... the long naked legs sprang in their heads, M-Master... the lustrous wink appeared, Feng... the cherry lips pursed sweet, Su...

... Ah! Both of them screamed almost together as they realized what had been going on!

That damned!! Wrath seared their rationality as they ditched the speeding ship and headed towards the dark red spaceship in sharp curves.

As they were approaching, the spaceship got larger in their sight, the illustration of the beauty grew clearer.

I knew it! It's Master! It's our great lord, the wisest Feng Su, the most gorgeous ace pilot in the Sanctuary, the goddess in the heart

of all male pilots and ours! This is preposterous! This is blasphemy! How dare this ship tainting our goddess! Both the pilots were agitated.

If they ever had the chance to pull this junk back to the Sanctuary, they swore, upon the innocence of their ace pilot, that no matter how sturdy this junk was, it would be obliterated in the flames of all male pilots!

But they did not have the time for that, as their rages were overflowing soon. They would not want this eyesore to exist, not even a second more!

"Hmm..." Seeing the two Dawn mechs abandoning the powership and heading towards the Coxcomb instead, Ye Chong was feeling weird, "What's going on?"

"Maybe they were finding the Coxcomb to be too handsome..." muttered Shang. Well those were merely Dawn mechs, something whether Ye Chong or Zhu Ling could have taken down easily.

"Yes, very true," nodded Lian Yue intensively as Shang was so precise at his description. "Yes, yes, yes," Zhu Ling, beside the nodding vanity, stepped to the front and stood up straight in pride.

"Hmph." Zhu Ling glanced at Ye Chong, "You could never imagine in the Sanctuary how popular the Winged Nirvana herself, Feng Su is. Spraying that kind of imagery of hers on the ship is obviously a direct call for war to the entire Sanctuary."

"Ohhhh..." Shang giggled, "I never knew our Feng Feng was this loved by the people..." The artificial indulgence was laughing shyly. "Hahahaha..."

Ye Chong gave an eye-on at Shang, "Ha... Ha... Ha." And Shang laughed awkwardly like a child being stared over his spilled milk.

...

The dark crimson spaceship was gigantic but well to those mentalist pilots from the Sanctuary, it was nothing but an empty

vase, which could be completely smashed in no time as they believed, their confidence rose high.

Wham!

Something was felt slammed upon their mechs, as their eyes fell on the screen confusingly. There was nothing?

Are we imagining things?

Although they were given a shocker for a moment, they did not stop, as they flew towards the spaceship in full speed.

As they approached the ship they could finally take a clear look over the illustration of Feng Su. The exotic expression on her face was heart-skipping for them. The anger was pumping their heart hard. How could this happen to our great lord! Our Winged Nirvana, Feng Su was not to be tarnished by something like this! How dare the owner hurled such insult on her! Unforgivable!!

And they formed a plan quickly, striving to give the owner of the ship a life lesson.

Chapter 241: Planet Rainbow

On Planet Rainbow, a dark red spaceship was laying alongside the docking zone. The spaceship, of its 3km length, was not attracting that much of attention among the other spaceships.

Although galaxies other than Csebesini were in hot water, the 4 forces had been performing all sorts of reorganization to restore the security of their territories. The pirates plundering everything had been knocked into oblivion, and soon intergalactic trades started once again. As affected by this incident, the figures of both incoming and outgoing spaceships at Rainbow had been increasing these days.

The docking zone, isolated by war, had regained its activity.

The dark red spaceship laid at one quiet corner.

Well, if anyone noticed the ship they would have been wondering why no one had left the spaceship for so long it had been parked. But who would really notice a normal spaceship at the pier anyway?

The spaceship was the Coxcomb, by the way.

Well, the process starting from the time the crew spotted two Dawn mechs chasing the powership, then suicidally heading towards the Coxcomb and being shot down by Ye Chong was merely a matter of few minutes. The Beauty's Secretion had always been the best assassin in the dark, with its corrosiveness melting the armors of the mechs and soon penetrating them, leakage happened and they were history before they knew it.

Under Shang's kindest "invitation" Little Rock boarded the Coxcomb. Of course, within the few brief exchanges of Shang and him, Shang's cunningly experienced talking style had gotten all the information he needed from Little Rock.

First off, Luo Wei had died, which matched what Zhu Ling had

stated. And the potency of Feng Su had once again be reinforced in Ye Chong's mind. And Little Rock managed to escape when Luo Wei gave a final struggle before his death.

Little Rock was a non-combat members in the Black Coves, so never once he was dipped in the silver liquid. Judging by Little Rock's description, one could determine that the silver liquid was something rather precious among the Black Covers. It was known scientifically as the "Muscular Texturizing Solution" and only the selected combat squad members would be dipped in the liquid.

Non-combat members, being the entities in a fighting organization, were of a rather low position, so Little Rock had always been the bullies' target back then. But ever since Commander Qiu Lie recognized his capabilities, he was shifted to the strategy department, which since then his life improved. Nevertheless, he still received discriminative behaviors from the pilots of the frontline from time to time, even under a commander's protection, which led to his shrinking personality. And Luo Wei was one of the only few pilots who treated the non-combat members with friendliness.

Shang, the psychological expert had millions of ways to win over Little Rock's heart in his mind. And they had formed a decent relationship from the beginning, which soon Little Rock grew fonder on Shang.

Towards Shang's superior performance, Ye Chong did not say a word, even though he was showing high respect towards his capabilities. He knew he was not an expert on this, even though he was confident to assume he would not worse than Shang when it came to talking appropriately.

Luckily I'm not the leader of the team, I'm seriously weak at this man... Laughed Ye Chong at himself in his mind.

Lian Yue, who only had his eyes on the pretties and the handsomes, was directly scorning at that mere average boy who in

fact was certainly underwhelming compared to Lian Yue himself. His body was short, he was underweight, one could say he was a puny coal coming out of nowhere, although his lustrous eyes were rather intelligibly expressive.

"Meh," snorted the vain man.

The happening after that was astonishing to him however, as the artificial indulgence and the little boy started playing tremendously complicated games, with tremendously overwhelming amount of calculations in a tremendously ingenious manner. Lian Yue had already been stunned to the alternate dimension as the game progressed, upon realizing the fact that he could not understand anything on the screen.

"I have to admit... he is a genius! No doubt!" he muttered as he failed miserably associating this easily overlooked puny underweight boy with the word "genius" gloriously shining in his mind. Aren't geniuses supposed to be worldly gorgeous like me? But the happening before him was irrefutable.

Zhu Ling on the other hand remained silent upon Little Rock's arrival, as she was well-aware of her position in the ship. She was rather surprised of this little boy with a similar age as hers, however. With his professional calculations, the boy would have been greatly regarded by the authority in the Sanctuary. She could not imagine how the Black Covers could ill-treat such a contributing genius.

After a wave of shock and amazement, the peace on the Coxcomb was restored, since everyone had their own tasks to do. Ye Chong had to perform his alchemy experiments, while having the responsibility to produce Beauty's Secretion; Zhu Ling needed those time to carry out her meditation trainings; Lian Yue had always been running between the metallurgy lab and Zhu Ling, while Little Rock had been competing Shang on some extremely complicated mathematics.

Little Rock, as easily overlooked as the pebbles at the roadside, had somehow made tremendous development under Shang's training, as his standard skyrocketed to a whole new level, which he got to switch opponent by then. Yes he was facing Mu instead. And Mu, with his godlike ability, was actually feeling a little troubled in defeating Little Rock, since unlike the artificial intelligence, Little Rock had the creativity to make some interesting detours.

Creativity of humanity would be something that a PSI like Mu could never imitate.

Everyday Mu Shang would report Ye Chong the progress of everybody else, although Ye Chong did not see the need in doing so, Mu Shang showed persistence in it.

And that oversized illustration of the gorgeous, under Ye Chong's continuous demand, Shang eventually took it down, with a heavy heart. Well, Ye Chong would not want to be suddenly bombarded by someone just because of the unnecessary attention the illustration had attracted.

"Done," Mu's voice remained flat as usual. The word signified Ye Chong's ability to get off the ship and wander at free will.

The Coxcomb - as it was parked at the docking zone - had completed scouting and mapping the landscape of the entire area. It would be rather essential to have planned a few sets of escape paths beforehand, especially when they were in the land of the Freedom Alliance, which none of them had any idea how the organization operated. Be cautious, that was what they thought.

The unknown always holds the greatest danger.

The monitoring was successful under the assistance of Little Rock, who had drastically improved the calculation the processor of the Coxcomb had to perform. This was also the very first collaboration between Little Rock and Mu. The outcome, as far as one concerned, could be considered satisfactory for Mu was able to

hack into the Virtual Connection Central Point at the docking zone effortlessly with the help of Little Rock.

Virtual Connection Central Point, as the name had defined itself, was a point where all the transmitting signals conglomerated in an area, which connected all users in the area at once.

After hacking into the central point, Mu and Little Rock began sneaking upon the other central points nearby. It did not take long before they successfully hacked into up to 13 points of virtual connection access.

Very quickly after, both of them started to create a new connection between these 13 central points, in a way the points would be connected in a completed crossing structure, which expanded the useable virtual resources as well as promoted its stability. The idea was brought up by Little Rock and was formed into a final plan after Mu's verification.

They reinforced the crossing structure afterwards. Mu first extracted all sorts of trapping program from the databank and laid them across the structure afterwards. Ye Chong was seeing Mu being so intense the first time near the control panel.

Well, Ye Chong could understand the artificial intelligence's intensive expression, he was being alert over someone, someone who was able to wipe a celeb completely from the Virtual World 20 years ago. How horribly strong that person could be! And Ye Chong had Mu's words, where he stated that he was not confident to carry out the same task as flawless as the person now. And that was the person's standard twenty years ago. Assuming the person was still living, within 20 years, the person could have become a sky-walking hacker, no, sky-flipping hacker perhaps.

One could not imagine the potency such person could have demonstrated using the Virtual world. Ye Chong also knew the whole point of Mu being so participative in the preparation was to ensure their safety, since this would be a duel across sections,

where two persons from two different worlds hacking into each other.

Preparation had been completed. And Ye Chong got off the Coxcomb, alone. Mu needed to watch over the entire warship while trying his best to handle that super Maverick from the Freedom Alliance. Zhu Ling, well she could be helpful in battles but Ye Chong had not grown comfortable enough to bring her out as working partner. His sole partner would be none other than Mu Shang.

Ye Chong brought a modified communicator with him, which he would use to keep in touch with the Coxcomb. As he was walking around, Mu and Little Rock had began engulfing the Virtual World of Rainbow gradually.

He walked down the stairs and realized he was actually at lost, having zero idea on where to start, as people were walking on the street tranquilly. It felt like he had got out of a fictional world and had returned to the humanity.

He made a new ID card, more precisely, "recover" his ID card on a little "help" from Mu. Ye Chong had already gotten use to this "recovery" process since this had been like the thousandth time he had done it. And this time, his pseudonym was Takano.

He went to one of the self-serving hotels, got himself a room.

Prometheus Group seemed to be rather well-known among the residents on Rainbow. The group was the leading financial group on the planet. They had numerous branches beneath them and every zone of Rainbow was occupied by companies of their subsidiaries, which was puzzling to Ye Chong as he had no idea which department that Gao Shichang, who happened to have the same name as his papa, was belonged to.

And it was a fruitless outcome when Mu carried out his research on Gao Shichang back then.

At least they saw a consistency within the fragmented information, which pointed towards Prometheus Group. It could have been a search of a needle in a haystack, which could take years, but Ye Chong did not bother. He had plenty of time to find out what had actually happened behind the scene. He would not mind spending the next one or two years staying on Rainbow to be a detective. And for those on the Coxcomb, he believed they would not care where they actually were.

Nevertheless, it felt a little strange for Ye Chong, since he could not tell if this was the first time he was on a mission alone. It was foreign to head out without Mu Shang by his side, even though he could have made contacts via the communicator. Mu had once advised him to avoid contact as much as possible unless on an emergency, too. It would be risky if Ye Chong contacted Mu, since it would be a piece of cake for that super Maverick to monitor the streaming over the communication process. Mu would in fact encrypt the entire chain of signal but he could not guarantee if it would be impossible for the foe to decode it.

Everyone was fearing that super Maverick from the Freedom Alliance.

As he wandered on the streets, Ye Chong saw the scattered pedestrians moving, with a depressing frown on their faces, under the tall buildings which part of them had turned into debris at some corners. The damage caused by war to the people, was not something that could be simply undone by time. The place was once a developed and lively place and now, it was devastating and lifeless.

Sometimes there would be flocks of mechs zooming by in the sky, which the piercing sound the air friction caused was still alarming to the residents. Something was clogging their heart, some sort of gloominess had clouded their mind. The residents never could imagine the days in devastation and now here they were, walking on the street as if it was a norm. Human was one kind with great

adaptability to their surrounding after all.

Ye Chong stopped. It was the arrival, Prometheus Group : Mech Research Center 76.

The center was a tall building, about 500 floors height, with a particular modern design. The walking staff seemed to be extremely engaged in their ongoing works, unlike the other places. The name of the company stood blatantly on top of the sign, which one could not miss.

Ye Chong lifted his head as he set his eyes upon the hologram projection at the outer wall of the building rolling all sorts of information about the center.

That was one notice which caught Ye Chong's attention. It was written in a rather desperate tone, where they were looking for all kinds of mech experts in the industry and they would pay handsomely for the expertise. And a large page of introduction on their facilities and hardwares followed. Ye Chong felt the urge to compliment the designer of this notice, it was too tempting! Even an indifferent person like him could not resist but to have slight fond over working here for the rest of his life.

He took a look at the date, it was published 10 days ago, with a duration of a year.

People were walking in and out of the building while he was reading the notice, where most of them were expressing deeper depression with their sighs and whines. There are hardly any person leaving the building with a smile.

Ye Chong, with his eyes, could tell the information those little gestures had suggested. These people must be the candidates for this job of the fantasy. The sorrow faced must have failed their selection while the smiley one must have been employed.

30 : 1. Okay that was a slight shocker to Ye Chong, never would he expected the rate of employment to be this low.

He stayed in one corner at the outside for a moment and to his surprise, the number of candidates grew over the time, and he could feel the lobby exploding. He frowned upon the phenomena, I know it is a really amazing job but I seriously do not see the need of this craze.

Oh wait, could there be something unknown to the outsiders?

And for some reason, Ye Chong uncontrollably headed towards the crowded gate.

Chapter 242: Hired I

Ye Chong did not expect to see even more people inside. Even with his skills, moving through the crowd was difficult. The main hall was packed with people, and one could hear the occasional greeting between the candidates.

"Old Zhao, you're here too. So?"

"Sigh, yeah, the world is so messed up now, it's hard to find a safe place to live. I didn't want to come, but Mei wouldn't have it. Besides, if we're hired, our families will be safer, so I decided to come give it a try. Gotta think about the children," the man said with a wry smile.

"Sigh, that's right, this world, how did it become such a mess?"

"I know ..."

From the people speaking around him, Ye Chong quickly realized the reason the place was packed. Anyone hired by the Prometheus Group would have his or her family protected. This was more attractive a benefit than anything else.

Surviving was the most important thing in a chaotic world.

Ye Chong unknowingly drifted to the front along with the crowd.

"Please show your identity card." A soft voice came from a beautiful lady, giving a slight nod at Ye Chong. The lady wore a working uniform in a neat and simple fashion, with a natural smile on her face that was warm and contagious.

Ye Chong was surprised to find himself at the front of the line.

"Please show your identity card," the lady repeated, this time a little louder. This caught the attention of the surrounding people, who quickly turned to look at Ye Chong. The ones lining up behind him were glaring at his hesitation. If not for their generally refined manners, someone would have started shouting at him by now.

As the people all stared at Ye Chong, he could not help but feel embarrassed.

"Oh." Ye Chong could only acknowledge awkwardly, and produced his identity card for the lady.

The lady received Ye Chong's identity card with both hands and gently swiped the card on a reader.

An intermediate level modification technician.

The lady paused upon knowing this. This was the lowest qualification she had seen so far. In the eyes of others, an intermediate level modification technician might be high up, but here among professionals, it was only an entry level qualification.

Most of the candidates here had quality expertise in mech related subjects. Besides, even with their industry standard high qualifications, they could not guarantee their entry into Prometheus Group. They must still go through the Group's special screening process.

Ye Chong had no industry standard qualifications of any kind. The intermediate modification technician status was only something Shang conjured up for him. Having a proper job would keep him inconspicuous. The job was also not too lowly or prestigious, suitable for Ye Chong to remain in the background.

The hiring process this time did not have a restriction on the allowed lowest qualifications. The lady disapproved, but her face did not betray her thoughts, a result of her extreme professionalism.

"Please head towards room 303. If you pass the test, please accept my sincerest congratulations." The lady smiled warmly at him.

Ye Chong ignored her completely, only thanking her flatly and turning to leave.

The lady was always confident of her smile - few could maintain their composure when she smiled at them. However, this man was

completely unmoved, behaving coldly throughout. She had met all kinds of people due to her profession, and was experienced in reading people. She knew that one should get to know a person by the eyes and not the face - expressions could lie, but the eyes could not.

This young man's eyes were cold and apathetic. She felt a shudder and quickly bowed her head to mask the unexpected jolt of emotions.

When she lifted her head, the cold figure had already vanished.

Room 303.

The room had only a single photon processor. Ye Chong had a profound moment of realization. So this was it. It reminded him of the time he accepted Yang An's invitation to compete at Blue Ocean Academy. What a familiar sight!

Could these people not think of more creative ways to test? Why were they all the same?

As expected, the photon processor was the first round of tests. Of course, it was much harder than the one at Blue Ocean Academy. Time flew, and Ye Chong suddenly felt like he was worlds away from his troubles.

He was now better than he was at Blue Ocean, and the test was not too hard for him.

However, Ye Chong did not want to stand out. He waited until the last moment before filling out the answers. The time allocated was also enough for him to think through his problems.

The quest to find out more about Gao Shichang, who could be Papa, was difficult and risky. Ye Chong did not expect to succeed in a day or two - that would be unrealistic. The other party had been very thorough, and it would not be easy to uncover the truth in a short time.

The situation was such that he had nowhere to begin with.

Perhaps entering this research center would be a good idea. Working from the inside should be easier than breaking through from the outside. This would put himself at risk, but Ye Chong could not think of a better idea.

Ye Chong had already studied every inch of the room when he first entered, ensuring that there was no danger. The room was not spacious. Aside from the photon processor, there was nothing else, also making it impossible to conceal any other people inside.

Making a solitary venture into the other party's territory was a dangerous move. Ye Chong had no plans of dying from this. The way he saw it, he would not mind spending years to investigate the matter about Papa, but if he were to die from it, then the costs outweighed the benefits. If Papa was still alive, he would not have approved of it too.

If everything he did could revive his Papa, then even his life would be worth it. However, try as he may, Papa would never come back. The thought saddened him.

Surviving was top priority. Dying in the quest for revenge was a foolish thing for him.

His mind was as calm and cold as ice. He understood the risks and benefits of this mission. Everything depended on the combined skills and abilities from him, Mu and Shang. With Guardian and Han Jia with him, he should be able to defend himself. Mu and Shang had also prepared an escape plan. As for the others, Ye Chong could not hope for them to achieve anything, only that they would stay out of trouble.

"Switch the display to room 303." A sweet and lazy voice from a woman resonated in the surveillance room.

Chapter 243: Hired II

"An intermediate modification technician?" The candidate's background surprised her. Her hair was tied up in a high bun, and the hair ends quivered as she lifted her chin, exposing her snow white neck.

"To think that an intermediate modification technician would come! Interesting!" Her sultry voice was sweet as honey. One could hear the sound of the others gulping in the surveillance room.

Half lying on a deep crimson sofa was a woman of unrivaled beauty, and she was the one who had spoken. Behind her stood a middle-aged man in a black suit. His profile was steely, and his muscles bulged under his suit. He looked expressionless, with his hands crossed at his back. From the beginning, his expression had not changed one bit.

The lady sat up slightly and lightly tapped on the photon processor on her desk with a slender white finger. The photon processor's holographic screen image immediately switched to room 303.

In the holographic feed was a young man, deep in thought.

Dark red irises framed by thin, long eyebrows, under which was a smooth, aquiline nose. Her moist, lustrous lips drew up into an alluring smile. The unreadable smile made her look even more seductive. This was seduction at its finest, blooming like a flower.

One could hear simultaneous gasps in the surveillance room. Only the man in a suit behind her maintained a cold expression.

Ye Chong was now using the ample time allocated to think. Back from when he first saw the research center, he had received plenty of information, and now he was attempting to organize them in his mind.

She watched the young man thinking. No, perhaps the man was

no longer so young. He was obviously over 20. This was the youngest candidate Qiu Man had seen so far. Knowledge was accumulated across time - while a 20-year-old man was considered an adult, he would still be considered a beginner only no matter which field he specialized in.

However, a talented young man would still be a good choice. Qiu Man looked at the man meaningfully, now realizing that his calm expression was contradicting too much with his age. The naive expression he wore earlier was probably only a trick of the eye. What she was seeing now was a steady, cold man.

Qiu Man's eyes gleamed as she noticed this sudden transformation.

In the holographic feed, the man was calmly entering his answers in the photon processor, lacking the joy that most candidates would have when they solved a problem. This was a maturity that belied his age.

"Indeed, this is an interesting man," Qiu Man thought to herself as her eyes narrowed, her right hand clasping lightly on the armrest with slender fingers. Behind her, the middle-aged man stood like a wooden pole.

Next, the man's performance surprised her. Even the one who marked his work, old Donald praised him highly, believing him to be a promising mech modification technician. Old Donald was a practical man. His stubbornness was found offensive by many, but his capabilities and insights were never doubted.

The candidate must be a genius.

However, the candidate was being too calm about it, such that even Qiu Man herself thought that something was off.

When she met the young man face-to-face, Qiu Man's heart was already in a turmoil. The sensitive Qiu Man could sense the sharpness in the man's calm eyes. His cold demeanor towards his

surroundings reminded her of those people known as elites - their eyes were almost identical to this man's. The thought of those inhuman personalities made Qiu Man very uncomfortable.

Swish! Suddenly the wooden middle-aged man behind Qiu Man stepped in front of her. His hollow eyes were suddenly bright as fire, glaring at Ye Chong.

This abrupt turn of events startled everyone around. Even Ye Chong was slightly surprised. The hostility in the other party's eyes was confounding. Was his cover broken?

Qiu Man was also just as shocked, as seen from her surprised expression. Even so, she still looked just as beautiful. This was the first time Qiu Guang had moved without her orders. All this while, she had thought Qiu Guang as a puppet, lifeless, and only kept him around because of his strict obedience. However, what happened now baffled her.

Ye Chong noticed from his movements that the middle-aged man had nifty footwork.

He was a combat expert, and a highly skilled one! It was apparent from the way the man moved with his speed and accuracy.

In that instant, Ye Chong's muscles tensed. While his feet never left the ground, he was already full of energy, ready to defend himself.

It would be suicidal to be relaxed when within 10 meters of a skilled combat expert. Ye Chong understood the potential damage that could be incurred within this radius more than anyone.

Fortunately, Ye Chong himself was not too shabby as well as a combat expert.

Ye Chong's minute physical responses were not unnoticed by the middle-aged man. His elbows lifted a little, his body inclined slightly, and his feet moved apart. To the average person, these seemed like normal movements, but Ye Chong could sense the

danger behind them. This further convinced him that the combat expert before him must be very capable.

Had the other realized his intentions?

The middle-aged man's eyes shone brightly with ferventness.

It was a pity that Qiu Man, shielded behind him, could not see it. She asked curiously, "Guang, what is it?"

Those words seemed to cool the middle-aged man almost instantly. The ferventness in the eyes of the man called Guang vanished without a trace. His eyes resumed their earlier hollow, lifeless look.

Guang returned to stand behind Qiu Man without a word, moving like a puppet.

Qiu Man took a curious glance towards Guang, but did not see anything amiss. She decided to focus her attention back on the young man before her. His appearance had provoked that strange response from the usually passive Guang. Besides, this young man called Takano was a strange character as he was.

Almost everyone knew the identity of the one who supported Prometheus Group from behind the scenes. It would only be more unusual if none of the other powers send their spies here.

However, Qiu Man believed that this young man was a spy. The training for spies was different from the training given to combatants. Moreover, spies and combatants gave off very different vibes.

All of a sudden, Qiu Man felt that the situation had gotten much more complicated.

Chapter 244: Hired III

Donald stared fixedly at Ye Chong, and the latter felt like something weird must have grown on his face. Qiu Man was still all smiles, and the middle-aged man behind her that she called Guang was still wearing a stale expression.

Ye Chong did not know that this beautiful, sophisticated woman was actually feeling very conflicted. It was obvious from Old Donald's face that the man was a genius, and not a talent to be missed. However, the young man did not seem like any ordinary person. Somehow, she was wary of this man whom she could not read clearly.

Ye Chong seemed unaffected as he stood silently at his place, looking very calm.

Qiu Man took another glance at him, and could not help laugh on the inside. Why was she so troubled all of a sudden? Even if this man had his own hidden agenda, wasn't the situation still under her control? As long as she increased surveillance on him, there would be many ways for her to deal with his movements. It was safer to keep this kind of people under her watch.

Was she really getting old now? She was growing timid! The woman absently traced her smooth profile.

This feminine gesture attracted the attention of almost everyone in the room. Even the aging Donald stared at Qiu Man. When he came to himself, the old man blushed.

Only two people kept their expressions unchanged. One was Ye Chong, and the other was the middle-aged man standing behind Qiu Man, Guang.

Qiu Man knew how much her actions could influence the people around her. Her looks were her most dependable weapon. That gesture just now may not be entirely done consciously, but she

knew that it was this kind of careless show of emotions that really moved others.

"When had men ever been able to defend themselves against lust?" She laughed in her own mind.

When she saw that even someone as old as Donald would blush, she could not help but chuckle. This made Donald feel like burying his head in the ground. However, when her glance swept across the young man's face, she paused.

What she saw was a calm and expressionless mask, the kind that made people feel uncomfortable.

The woman's sudden chuckle had startled Ye Chong a bit. Ye Chong was now better at reading people than before. He could see that this woman was not easy to handle, and she was far better at controlling emotions than him.

However, Ye Chong faced his adversary calmly. He was confident of his own strengths. The current circumstances were advantageous to him. If the other party balked, he was sure that he could escape unscathed. Even if the middle-aged man, Guang was a skilled combat expert, he was not afraid of him.

In terms of combat, Ye Chong believed that even if Lan Yixing were alive right now, the man would not be a match against him.

The woman quickly resumed her peaceful composure, still smiling cheerfully. However, Shang had once told him not to let his guard down, even when the other person was smiling at him. Ye Chong could not agree more.

Seeing that Ye Chong had no intention of speaking, Qiu Man gave another laugh and said, "Welcome to Prometheus Group!"

Donald was overjoyed. This beautiful and fatal woman was a mystery to everyone in the research center. Everyone was aware that she had a complicated background, but no one knew of the details. However, none dared to disobey her. Experience showed

that those who did all ended up with horrible consequences. Since Qiu Man had decided, it meant that this young man that she had his eyes on was definitely hired.

Donald's overjoyed expression was a deep contrast to Ye Chong's calm face, as if Donald was the one hired, and not Ye Chong.

Before Ye Chong could react any further, Donald grabbed his arm and ushered him towards his laboratory.

Qiu Man watched the backs of the two figures as they left, her mouth arching up meaningfully as her large, pearly eyes gleamed. Her mind was still occupied with the reflexive movement of that young man earlier.

Just when Donald reached for the man, she saw his right hand jerking away in reflex, but the young man quickly reacted and pulled his hand back and towards Donald's. The movements were so fast that she almost thought it was a trick of the eye, and Donald himself did not seem to even notice.

"Takano," Qiu Man muttered, looking at the information in her hands.

It was a pity that she did not see how the eyes of the motionless middle-aged man behind her glowed with ferventness when Ye Chong's right hand jerked.

When she turned back, Guang's eyes had already resumed its typical hollowness.

The events today seemed to be out of her control, and that made her feel uncomfortable. Even the usually obedient Guang had acted strangely today, and that surprised her more than anything.

Seeing Guang now as his usual self, Qiu Man's delicate eyebrows knitted together.

"Guang, do you understand me?" Qiu Man probed carefully.

Guang stood unmoving.

"Strange, what's with Guang today?" Seeing Guang looking like his usual self, Qiu Man muttered to herself, but her eyes were discreetly looking for Guang's reaction.

Guang did not move, his eyes hollow as always.

Qiu Man gave up, and went to the door. Guang immediately followed closely behind her.

Donald's laboratory was so messy that Ye Chong found himself surprised. It felt like returning to the trash planet.

All sorts of mech parts were scattered across the floor, and moving around proved difficult. Some of the parts were even rusted. Ye Chong even suspected that the living conditions here may be even worse than on the trash planet.

Donald was obviously used to the place, and did not seem embarrassed.

"Get familiar with this place. From today onwards, you'll be my assistant. Hmm, don't simply move the things around here. If you questions, feel free to ask me. Remember, don't disturb me when I'm working," Donald explained.

Nonetheless, Ye Chong was currently focused on a light purple ongoing project on one of the laboratory workbenches.

Chapter 245: Becoming an Assistant

This must be an unfinished mech engine. It had a light purple alloy shell, with a complex mesh of intricate photon circuits inside. The light flowing within the circuits looked like something from another world. All the parts seemed exquisite. While it was still unfinished, Ye Chong could already sense the power it would one day be capable of.

Ye Chong was not proficient with engines; that was up to Lian Yue, the real expert. However, before Lian Yue had joined Coxcomb, Ye Chong did his own studies in mech engines. His earliest experience was with Black Cove's mech engines, and later the ones from the Sanctuary. He had dismantled the Dawn mechs a few times himself. However, the one he was most familiar with was the MPA's mech engines. In Mu and Shang's database were plenty of mech schematics of MPA's, including their mech engines.

In terms of knowledge in engines, Ye Chong had much to catch up with Lian Yue, but when it came to exposure to different mech engine models, Ye Chong held the advantage.

The mech engines from the Three Forces all had their own unique characteristics, and were based on vastly different principles. However, their performance were about the same. Ye Chong at least noticed that mech models of the same level from the Three Forces moved at about the same speed. On the other hand, for mech engines of different levels in the same organization, the engine designs did not differ in design principle, but only in the quality of building material and detailed structure.

Ye Chong had thought that these three mech engine principles were the foremost in the world today.

However, looking at this unfinished engine, Ye Chong felt like he had just been struck in the head, and felt a little dazed. This was a completely new design, completely different from the three

principles he knew of!

At a certain level, Ye Chong was similar to academics. When he saw this original mech design, his rational mind took a back seat momentarily, astonished as he was.

Four support chambers stretched out from the engine body like legs, an odd sight. Mech engines with support chambers were not unheard of, but usually only one or two were used. This was the first time Ye Chong saw a mech engine with four support chambers. He was getting a little too eager to see what was inside the engine.

However, he did nothing, and his expression remained unchanged. He did not even give another glance at the workbench. After Donald finished with the induction, his back was to Ye Chong as he worked, so Ye Chong's minute changes in expression went by unnoticed.

Everything was just beginning.

Ye Chong began to tidy up the laboratory. This was a difficult task, but one that Ye Chong was most familiar with. On the trash planet, Ye Chong was solely responsible for the cleanliness of his home, so the routine was natural for him.

Donald was definitely a workaholic, oblivious to the world once he started working. When he was done, he was surprised to find the laboratory looking very different. All his stuff was arranged in categories around the room, and the lab now looked neat and tidy.

Donald did not think much of these things. He took a glance at Ye Chong and said, "You should be spending your time on work, and not waste it on cleaning up the lab. You have talent, but this doesn't mean you have time to waste. Workbench 2 has a modification outline, go and calculate the grinding value."

Ye Chong acknowledged. He was not discouraged with how Donald ignored his labor, since he knew that researchers like him

often do not place importance in things over than research work.

Of course, Ye Chong did not reorganize the lab for cleanliness, or for comfort. To him, an organized place would make work more efficient. However, he had no intention of explaining himself to Donald.

Ye Chong was always decisive in his actions. He immediately turned towards Workbench 2. Behind him, Donald's eyes flashed with approval, but he quickly returned to his own work.

The grinding value was a troublesome calculation. While it was not difficult, the nitty-gritty details involved were often enough to drive someone crazy. This was also one of those calculations that demanded a good fundamental base of knowledge, since the steps of calculations were too detailed, encompassing almost 80 percent of all basic calculations related to mechs.

To Ye Chong, however, it was not too difficult a task. He had patience, and his foundation was solid, to a level that even Donald would not have expected. Back in the days, he studied mech foundations intensively at Aurora, and the elderlies' unceasing attention to him made him very knowledgeable in mech principles. These days, the younger generation would never spend time on something like this.

Ye Chong could even identify places where the mech modification schematics seemed unreasonable. Mech modification was his specialty. With his rich combat experience, he knew better than most mod technicians on ways to better improve combat performance. The schematics he was studying now had a balanced design, but there were many details that Ye Chong thought could be improved. Whichever mod technician drew up this mech modification schematics must be quite capable. There were a few new ideas in there that inspired Ye Chong.

Nevertheless, Ye Chong had no time to study it closely. He dived right into the work of calculating the grinding value.

"Hmm, not bad, it's close to what I expected. Err, let me see, this is Rigg's modification schematics, not bad at all. Hmm, you've learned about mech modification before, right?" Donald suddenly turned to Ye Chong and asked.

"Yes." Ye Chong replied.

"Your foundations are not bad, quite solid, it's rare to see that in young people nowadays." Donald continued, "Hmm, try to improve his schematics and reduce the grinding value by 0.05."

With that, Donald turned back to his work and ignored Ye Chong.

"This is information on Takano?" Qiu Man looked at the brief and simple information in her hands. Her brows knitted together, her alluring profile turned dignified.

Chapter 246: An Expected Disappointment

The underling was terrified, and quickly replied respectfully, "Yes, this just came in from the Intelligence Division."

The Intelligence Division was a reliable source of information. Had she not been very familiar with someone on the inside, it would have been impossible to obtain this dossier. The Intelligence Division would not have wasted their efforts on something so trivial.

Takano was not a fake identity - this was apparent from the dossier. The Intelligence Division had one of the longest histories of existence, having been set up over two decades ago. Besides, she knew the boss of the division, and what that boss specialized in.

On the surface, this person's background was sparkling clean. However, Qiu Man thought otherwise. The content of the dossier was too simple, not enough to even derive anything useful out of it.

For the moment, however, she had run out of moves. Behind her, Guang still stood with a wooden expression. Due to his odd reaction that day, Qiu Man had gone out of the way to bring him to that mysterious laboratory, but the man did not behave any different than usual, which made Qiu Man gave up in the end.

Ye Chong did not know that he had caught Qiu Man's attention. Everyday, he worked in Old Donald's laboratory, from early morning till late at night, without much rest. He was beginning to think that he would begin to forget why he was there in the first place.

Ye Chong had always yearned for this kind of plain but fulfilling life. He was no longer as curious of the world as he was when on the trash planet.

Old Donald would always come up with all sorts of crazy ideas.

When he saw Ye Chong successfully reducing the grinding value of the mech modification schematics by 0.05, he began to delegate much harder tasks to Ye Chong. This was exasperating to Ye Chong, but he could not help but also felt intrigued by those new ideas.

He was not aware, of course, of how surprised Old Donald was at this stage. Some of the problems he had delegated to Ye Chong involved some relatively unknown fields of knowledge. He was sure that even those so-called advanced mod technicians would not be able to solve them. However, this young man with the title of intermediate mod technician had surprised him again and again to his delight. Moreover, his ingenuity also impressed him.

As expected, he was not wrong! Donald felt thankful that he insisted back then, or he would have missed his chance with this genius. All this while, he had always been lonely. Now that he was growing old, he wished to find a capable student, but did not want to start teaching from the basics.

In this hiring session, Qiu Man may have been the decision maker, but anything related to his field of knowledge would be left to him. Ye Chong was such an example. His solutions were different from the ones stored in the photon processor, so they were sent to Donald himself. Ye Chong's demonstration of his talent made Donald so excited that he immediately rushed to see the young man.

The hiring session was still going on for now, but none of the candidates' responses had required his attention anymore.

By the time the hiring session ended, Ye Chong had already been working there for close to half a month.

In this half a month, Ye Chong had also begun to have a rough understand of the organization. Mech Research Center 76 was a subsidiary mech research center of the Prometheus Group. There were many research centers like this under the Group. From the

products of these centers, it was clear that they were not involved with the core products of Prometheus Group.

What Ye Chong thought was strange was that a subsidiary organization like this would have someone as good as Donald. Donald was a master of his field, and should not be here. He should be at the core of the research work. Ye Chong believed that the Freedom Alliance would not make such a careless mistake.

After spending time so much time with Donald, Ye Chong believed that he could judge his abilities quite well. The man was another master level mech expert that he had met, the second he had met in the Five Galaxies, with the other being Fred the Great. Fred's Yu Di was an excellent mech with crafty designs, limited in power only by the materials available to him.

In terms of mech knowledge, these masters from the Five Galaxies were not so far off from the masters of the Sanctuary or Black Cove. It was a pity that the Five Galaxies were lacking by a wide margin in terms of fundamental research compared to the Three Forces, such as in metal alloys.

Ye Chong did not know how the Freedom Alliance fared in terms of research, but he believed that no organization would leave such a master level expert outside of their core research team. Besides, the research center's director was the woman he met that day. From the gossip flowing around him, Ye Chong came to know that the woman had a complicated background. Everyone in the research center was wary of her. Even Donald, who acted arrogantly in front of others, would behave himself before this woman.

While the woman had always smiled at him whenever they met, Ye Chong always felt a chill inside him. The puppet-like middle-aged man behind her was also someone to watch out for - the man was no amateur!

This seemingly ordinary subsidiary center was not as innocent as

it seemed to be. However, Ye Chong did not wish to look further into it. He was here because of the man who shared his Papa's name; there was no need to complicate things.

However, Ye Chong was disappointed to find that he had found out nothing about Gao Shichang so far. Fortunately, Ye Chong was not in a hurry. He knew exactly how difficult this operation was going to be, and his disappointment was only to be expected.

During his time here, Ye Chong had contacted Mu, but only through the comms device. Ye Chong described his situation briefly. Mu had no issues on his side. Careful as he was in his disguise, he had not invited the attention of that super hacker yet.

Coxcomb still operated as normal, and the people onboard all behaved themselves, staying out of trouble. Without Mu's permission, no one was allowed to open the hatch. However, Mu reported that Zhu Ling seemed to have reached a bottleneck in her training. Mu asked Ye Chong if he should pass over the information about mentalist training extorted from Mr Yin last time to her. According to Mu, this could increase the chances of her breaking through her bottleneck by 53 to 60 percent.

Ye Chong gave it a moment's thought, and agreed with Mu's suggestion. After all, he had given Overwing to her anyway, and the information about mentalists was useless to him. Ye Chong knew that he was not suited at all for mentalist training. If he could not even get pass the most basic meditation training, then the rest of the training would be wasted on him. Giving the information to Zhu Ling, who had a solid training foundation, was the wiser choice.

With this, however, the gap between Ye Chong and Zhu Ling would grow even larger. He was no match against Zhu Ling with her Overwing. Now that he passed the mentalist training information to her, the disparity in their abilities would further widen.

When would he finally be able to own a mech that was on the same level as Overwing, but more suited for himself?

That day seemed so very far away! Ye Chong looked at the mech parts in his hands. The designs were exquisite, but the thought of Overwing dampened his mood.

"Takano, come with me for a moment," Donald interrupted Ye Chong's musings.

Chapter 247: Troublesome Woman

Lian was surprised to see Ye Chong following behind Donald. She remembered well the intermediate modification technician that she had ushered that day when she was on duty. These days, she was busy with the hiring session and was not aware that the young man was already recruited. It was no wonder that she was surprised to find him trailing behind Donald.

Ye Chong did not notice Lian. On the day of his interview, his attention was focused on all the other candidates. Lian may be a pretty woman, but for someone as obtuse as Ye Chong, it was not enough. Ye Chong only saw the crowd behind the woman. They were all above 40 years of age, and their hands seemed to be heavily calloused. Ye Chong realised then that they were all candidates who had been hired.

Lian bowed slightly to Donald and said, "Chief, they're all here." When she lifted her head, she was surprised to see the young man standing just beside Chief Donald. Experienced workers would know to never stand beside their superior during a lecture session. It was more appropriate to stand a half step behind their superior.

This young man was obviously inexperienced. Thus was Lian's conclusion, but Chief Donald did not seem to be offended.

Donald nodded expressionlessly and looked around. "Is Ms Qiu not here?"

Lian replied respectfully, "Ms Qiu is currently occupied with other matters. She said that you will be in charge here."

Donald grunted in acknowledgement and faced the crowd. "Since you're all hired, that means you must be at least somewhat capable. As long as you work hard, I believe you will be properly rewarded. As for the general scope of your work, I believe you must have received it. All in all, here in the center, it's all about walking the talk."

All the new recruits listened quietly with respect. After all, this was Donald, the only Great Master on planet Rainbow! Most of the recruits here were his fans. Only Ye Chong's unmoved expression as he stood right beside Donald was a little odd.

"I think you're all familiar with your job scopes. I don't have time to follow up with all of you individually. This is my assistant, Takano. If you have any questions, find him. He will also be responsible for inspecting your work."

His words were met with an outburst from the crowd.

All of them, besides Lian, had thought that Ye Chong was Donald the Great's student. While there were many academic institutions available these days, some still preferred the traditional way of teaching. However, this young man looked like he had just passed his 20th birthday, how could he take on such an important duty?

Lian also let out a soft gasp despite herself, but quickly covered her mouth. However, her eyes still shone strongly with disbelief. The research center never had such a young researcher, much less allow him to do work inspection. It was usually the more experienced and reputable old researchers who were given this role. They were more persuasive both in terms of their abilities and their reputation. However, this young man was only an intermediate mod technician, and he was so young. What was Chief Donald thinking?

Ye Chong was also shocked, and groaned inside. He had joined this center to infiltrate further into Prometheus Group, and find out more about Gao Shichang. Laying low was his priority, but now Donald's order had pushed him to the forefront of attention.

Fortunately, he was able to keep his cool, at least maintaining his calm exterior.

Donald was satisfied with everyone's reaction, and even more impressed with Ye Chong's composure. From the work he had delegated to Ye Chong recently, he could tell that this intermediate

mod technician was actually far more capable than the average advanced mod technician. Besides, his creativity was a rare quality for most mod technicians.

This talent should be nurtured. Hence, Donald made his decision. Besides, he understood the real intention behind the research here. To the higher-ups, the projects given to these new recruits were only a cover for the outsiders to see. He still had his own experiments to do, and did not want to waste time on these meaningless chores. Even if Ye Chong were to blunder up, it would not matter. Donald hoped that the work would be good training for Ye Chong. To him, that was what most young people lacked.

Ye Chong said nothing. Donald was happy to see him so steady, and so declared that the meeting was over.

"Assistant Gao, please have a look at this matrix arrangement."

"Assistant Gao, can you please look at this new photon circuit schematics? I can't seem to find out where the problem is."

There were too many requests like these coming in, and Ye Chong soon earned their respect. Qiu Man did not object to Donald's decision after her return. Besides, Ye Chong's performance surprised them all.

Even Donald, who gave the role to Ye Chong, was also surprised. He did not expect Ye Chong to do his job so well. To him, the young man may be a genius, but he was only a 20-year-old teen, and knowledge took time to accumulate.

However, Ye Chong's performance was too impressive.

Ye Chong had a solid foundation, and was familiar with a wide range of subjects that people began to wonder if he was actually a Great Master in mechs in his previous life! Almost all problems presented to him were easily solved, and while they may be very difficult, some of them involved some relatively unknown mech

subjects.

Who was his teacher? What would it take to produce such an exemplary student?

In particular, his creativity and flexibility were astonishing. His creative solutions were all easy to realise, and more people began to wonder if he was actually an old veteran in mech modifications. Young people may be bursting with creativity, but most of them were unrealistic ideas, impossible to translate into actual products.

This was the difference between reality and ideas.

Only a truly experienced mech modification technician could handle the delicate balance between the two. Soon, the researchers found that the young assistant called Takano was able to translate his creativity into practical solutions. This ability that did not match his age won the approval of the other researchers.

The atmosphere in the research center was cheerful, and Ye Chong's performance won respect and approval. No one doubted the appropriateness of Donald's decision.

In fact, Ye Chong was quite taken aback by the atmosphere around him. Fortunately, he still remembered his original mission. His keen sense told him that the woman called Qiu Man was watching him. Many a time did he find that woman's smiling eyes flash meaningfully at him.

The woman was an annoyance to Ye Chong. Her smile was always faint and unreadable. Ye Chong found that no one could stand against her. Even Old Donald, with his skin all wrinkled up from age, would blush at the sight of her.

This made Ye Chong wary. He dared not relax whenever the woman was around. Fortunately, nothing strange had happened so far. The woman's influence was so strong that it surprised Ye Chong. Just a glance, and Ye Chong could feel his heart racing for no reason.

When it had happened the first time, Ye Chong was almost scared out of his wits, thinking that he was attacked by an unknown force. Was it an infrasound wave attack? Fortunately, he quickly caught up to what was really happening.

"Biology class really does come in handy." Such was Ye Chong's first thought upon his realisation.

Ye Chong never thought that a person's glance could be so powerful. Fortunately, he was also very good at controlling himself. Even as he trembled inside, his face betrayed nothing. This became something of a legend in the research center, as Ye Chong was the only man who could stay composed before Qiu Man.

Ever since that last incident, Ye Chong was very conscious of his own reactions. It was not that he thought badly of this natural response, but he felt that it would put him in danger.

Ye Chong remembered someone saying that the difference between humans and animals is that humans could control their natural instincts.

Besides, the expressionless man standing behind the woman was also someone he should be careful of. While Ye Chong could not see any reason for that man to attack him, the situation was still unclear. If he grew careless before a combat expert and made a mistake, he would be so dead.

Qiu Man smiled enticingly and called, "Takano."

It was like a flower had bloomed in full glory, and everyone in the entire room except Ye Chong experienced a lapse in attention. Ye Chong acknowledged with a wooden expression, but inside he was tormented. This was not the first time for him, but Ye Chong had no choice. His reaction was also the center of attention. If he ignored the woman any further, he would create further problems for himself.

For the time being, Ye Chong did not want to stir things up, but this did not mean that he was averse to it. Ye Chong lowered his head, and the flash in his eyes went unnoticed.

Chapter 248: I Had Gone Too Far!

Qiu Man was unable to see through the man standing before her, as the man had always been displaying a kind of indifference while retaining the same expressionless features whenever she saw him. Even his eyes were not wavering at the slightest bit. Qiu Man was not the pompous and conceited kind of woman, but at least she knew herself well enough to tell where to stop and which part of her would work most likely. The man was never moved by her words and gestures however, as he stood there, immobile like a sculpture. It was certainly demotivating for her.

That was the first time she actually doubted her own charm as her curiosity over this very man named Takano grew. She could tell from her observation that he must have some kind of unspeakable motive to be here, although Takano had yet taken any unusual action to justify her intuition. It could be her overthinking, but she trusted her intuition deeply.

Very well, it's not like we have the super top-secret here. It could be interesting, Takano. Thought Qiu Man, intrigued.

"Takano, I have been hearing compliments from the colleagues on your works recently," she let off a brief smile, as the fleshy cheeks of her formed two sweet-looking dimples, her alluring stare suggested otherwise. The air in the room felt a little sugary out of sudden. It was refreshing and warm, except for that Guang who was exerting his iciness through his lack of expression and soulless eyes.

Ye Chong felt nothing towards her tease. He had been through the same situation for countless times, that he was able to fully control himself from reacting over such level of teasing. He did not let out a word as in his eyes, the woman in front seemed to be emanating a kind of danger, which kept him alert all the time.

Qiu Man, as if expected Ye Chong to stay muted, chuckled briefly

as she got up from her seat and did an outrageous stretch on her back. The perfect curve of blood-surging proportion was waving before him. If there were other men in the room, they would probably be dead by now, due to the excessive loss of blood through the nose.

Ye Chong did not see the curve as he had shifted his entire attention to the surrounding instead. He looked at Guang, the lamp, the window, this was one of the ways Ye Chong could think of. His brain had identified Qiu Man to be none other than a mere humanoid mutated species, like which man would be aroused by a mutated lifeform?

She skipped her step, a swing as she moved to Ye Chong's side. Her enchanting smile was magnetic, her eyes were electrifying, every part of her body was speaking.

Her expressive eyes stared right into Ye Chong's eyes, her body tilted forward, with the deep fissure over the hills sneaking through her buttons.

Ye Chong still remained unmoved. His expression was frozen, as if he was staring the air. His damned eyes were unwavering as before.

Dammit! Ughhh! This little... Qiu Man started to get agitated, although her smile grew far more gorgeous than before. "Hmm~?" She raised her chin slightly, exposing her neck, the gesture held the same effect towards the opposite gender. Qiu Man was very much convinced that this could be her best performance ever since she was born.

Being so close, she could discern every detail on Ye Chong's face. Other than the occasional muscle contraction due to his profound respiration, she saw nothing else. His eyes, contrary to her expectation, were not reacting to anything she did.

Qiu Man did not intend to give up just yet, as she further reduced the distance between them, with her tender lips almost onto Ye

Chong's cheek while her lifted arm gently approached the man's cheek. The scene was suggestive at all angles. The only thing that felt off was Qiu Man's loyal Guang who stood there like a lamp stand.

Ye Chong was not sparing attention at the inching lust, as his eyes were on Guang who began approaching towards him. This man, he is very dangerous. Commented Ye Chong.

A moist, warm breath of the wild sprayed upon his face.

Ye Chong flinched.

Teehehee... it's working! Qiu Man was excited over her first achievement on this man for she finally broke the petrifying spell of the man.

Ye Chong had always been maintaining a certain distance away from people. He would react even on a man's approach, let alone a mutated lifeform. He would not be Ye Chong if he did not take any action.

His pupils shrunk drastically. "Ouch!" Ye Chong's curved left arm rocketed high, seizing that strange thing invading his proximity.

"Ow Ow Ow!" Qiu Man could not help but to wail pitifully, which did not seem appealing to Ye Chong at all. Never once he would have a soft spot for a mutated lifeform in a disguise of human. The seize was a really forceful one. "Owww!" Qiu Man could feel her wrist shattering, as her beautiful face squeezed into something indiscernible.

Crack. The sound of bones cracking rang throughout the room.

The attack, habitually by Ye Chong, also came in a set. Once the first blow was successfully delivered, the second would follow. His eyes had spotted all the critical points on this mutated puppet which had lost her balance. And of course, he aimed the throat of Qiu Man, as his right hands, having its fingers slightly curled, zapped towards the target!

"No. No... No..." Qiu Man's expressive eyes were dramatically expressing her bottomless fear and astonishment. "No!"

Wham. A hand blocked Ye Chong's launching hand.

The strength was so much greater than Ye Chong's expectation. He then felt a gale swaying his left hand, which he immediately loosened as he backed off.

He raised his eyes and saw a pair of eyes with luster of war. Guang made a fancy turn on his arms and held the falling lady.

Wait what? Ye Chong only realized by then, that he had been facing Qiu Man and not some humanoid mutated lifeform.

Guang remained in his stance and had not taken any action.

"My hand... Ow..." Ye Chong gave a glance at the tearing lady, "Please do not get too close," he said and left.

Guang did not hold Ye Chong back, as his searing eyes were cooling down, soon returning their usual soulless expression.

Great. The moment Ye Chong left the room, he felt bitter of himself. I had gone too far... I was not sure who Qiu Man actually was in the company but she led the tasks of the entire research unit, that even Donald the elderly had to listen to her opinions before every move. She seemed to have a strong background, which could have been having millions of instances with the authority. And here I am, breaking her hand. No way I would ever be infiltrating the core of the company...

The situation was bad, really bad, as Ye Chong wondered if Qiu Man would be enraged and the security would be called. Once he left Qiu Man's room, he started sprinting, like a falling meteorite. He ran against the inertia and tried getting away with his misconduct. Running away would be the best option.

Ye Chong had always depicted an indifferent character to the other researchers in the center. But that very scene where he sprinted like an animal in a forest fire had attracted the surprised

look of his colleagues. They tried greeting him, sometimes asking him what had happened. There was no answer from him, only ignorance and an increasing velocity of his steps.

People were astounded, as they never expected the assistant to be such a runner. A really fast one too.

Chapter 249: The Chase I

Ye Chong tried collecting his thoughts afterwards. He must admit that it would be too far-fetched for one to infiltrate the insides of the company. He knew himself well, that he would be the last person on Rainbow to be assigned with this task. And among Mu, Shang and he himself, probably only Shang could do it well. But it certainly was not the right time to contact Shang, he was unavailable at the moment. And they could not switch just yet, Mu had an important task on the table. If without Mu's guard, fearing the super Maverick in the dark, Ye Chong would not be able to conduct anything.

It was clear that an assassin who could deliver a deadly blow upon you would be a nuisance to deal alone. It felt as if he was in the dark, with his eyes coveting the time to make the strike. You would be fully exposed, head to toes, the pressure would be something unimaginable.

Ye Chong had never worried about this before, since he was given Mu Shang's assistance, which happened to be the trump on his deck. Ye Chong could now feel the potency of Mu Shang as the actual fearsomeness of a super Maverick was defined in his mind. He was glad that Mu was there, along with Little Rock. He could at least ensure his own safety even though they might be underwhelmed in front of a sky walker. He was confident over Mu, as always. No way he would dare to travel to Planet Rainbow if Mu was not there.

Planet Rainbow was the lair of the foe, which was reinforced throughout the years the foe had been running on the planet itself. It would be ridiculous if the foe claimed to not have infiltrated every corner on the planet.

It was not a wild goose chase for Ye Chong over the past few days anyway. He managed to take a good look at every spot in the research center. There were occasions where he even paid a night

visit, rummaging every drawer and folder, even though he ended up discovering nothing. As far as Ye Chong had observed thus far, the only valuable thing would be that developing new engine model of Donald the elderly.

Donald the aged was facing problem making a breakthrough on his development apparently.

At Ye Chong's current level he could not really tell the meaning behind each detail of the engine's design, but that would not prevent him from appraising it. Just like most thefts happening out there, the thief might not be able to perceive the beauty of a well-known masterpiece, but he knew the fact that a drawing would not be called "masterpiece" for no reason, his senses were great enough to justify his judgement.

The security of the research unit was nearly non-existent. It was as effortless as sneaking into your own house as Ye Chong made it through. Obviously the company showed little concern towards Donald's research, judging by the lack of proper security facilities, which was a nice setting for Ye Chong. He eventually copied down every information related to the engine. He knew, if he passed this plan to Lian Yue, it would not take long before the newest engine model had officially showed up in this world. Ye Chong would be ridiculed if he never fully utilized the master craftsman on his ship.

Well, the unfortunate part was, Ye Chong did not take the hassle to travel for this uncompleted engine or he would have been calling everyone in the ship to prepare for departure and leave this menacing planet already.

There had yet clues on papa this far, while the plan for infiltration did seem unpractical. Did someone say invasion? Are you joking?

There was no clue. And it was something that happened 20 years ago. Thinking of the possibility to actually acquire something, Ye

Chong was in a blank dismay.

Wait!

Ye Chong sprung up from his seat, his eyes grew intense, as he listened to the surrounding carefully. Now that Mu was not by his side, without those fancy super detection he had to rely on his senses in order to survive. Fortunately, his senses did not weaken throughout the journey.

Ye Chong was currently at a residential area. Technically, whichever planet it was, the residential area always seemed to be the most chaotic area in the place. The people might have gained their happiness living on the planet, while being provided free residences by the government as part of their citizenship. However, anyone would have moved away from the area the moment they had gained additional disposable income, since in reality... this was the place with the worst safety and outdated facilities while illustrating the lowest standard of living on the planet.

Everyone here had one simple wish, that is, to leave this damned place as soon as possible.

Nonetheless, such place would be perfect as Ye Chong's hideout. No way that Qiu Man would take no action after today's incident where Ye Chong snapped her hand. So he remained highly alert for the time being.

What's coming will come.

Ye Chong did not have any form of regret over what he had done. Even though he had degraded his position in the situation through that unthoughtful behavior of his, regrets would not do any help. What he could do was to figure out a way to overcome this issue and have a good session of repentance so that he would not repeat the same mistake in future. But... will the same thing not happen again? Will I be able to prevent myself from doing that? Ye Chong gave a bitter laugh.

He deployed the Guardian in stealth.

The Guardian would perform better than Han Jia in the concrete jungle. He went into the cabin, with the welcoming vision of monochrome.

Boom! The walls fell into debris, the dust flew up high.

The materials used to build these residences were of rather tedious quality. At least the dusty scene gave Ye Chong the best camouflage he needed.

The daggers had already been withdrawn. Ye Chong sometimes wondered what mechanism formed these daggers. The twin daggers of the Guardian remained as a mystery to him. The Guardian - the result of Gu Shaoze's brilliance - had never failed to surprise him again and again.

And the twin daggers were displaying a sharpness that Ye Chong believed to be the strongest among all weapons he had seen before.

Ye Chong made his move before the dust subsided!

Whichever brand the hologram detection system was, its accuracy would always decrease with the complication of the area.

And within such a cramped area, the jumbling system did not seem to be more reliable than the primitive senses of humanity, especially for Ye Chong who possessed an astonishingly sensibility.

A tip to his toes, Ye Chong did a gesture to initiate his run, as he fired himself off like a golden cannon ball, dashing right into the endless sandstorm.

The information was overloading the visual system of the Guardian, as the projection was utterly disordered. The refreshing data was flooding the intercourse, which refreshed at a speed that Ye Chong could no longer distinguish. It just looked like a plain white milky way with intensive motion.

He decided to close his eyes instead. There was no panic as he

remained as calm as the falling snow. His breath was inaudible as he set his focus upon his hearing.

Ye Chong was naturally acquainted with amazing hearing, which was further developed ever since he began meditating. The chip given by Lan Yixing also included a very detailed guide on the application of the sense of hearing in combats. Legend said there were practitioners whose hearings were so great that they could literally fight with their eyes closed, as they could hear the flow of the wind to help them make the judgement.

Well, that would be something Ye Chong could only be envious of. He relied on his hearing anyway. It seemed reckless yet he had already sorted it out in his mind - his hearing might not be as great as the legendary practitioners, but he did not fight unarmed, he was in a mech where people could hear the clearer happening inside. That would be more than sufficient for me to make an accurate judgement.

Klink, klank, thump. The falling of the debris...

Hoo... Ha... Hoo... The sound of my own breath...

Hush... Hush... The sound of the wind...

Wham! It was not loud but Ye Chong could hear that sonorous sound coming at the front off is left. 12 meters away!

Ye Chong's hands which had been laying over the control panel began to move!

Chapter 250: The Chase II

The Guardian launched itself forward soundlessly. The sound of striking of where it landed, as its right arm tightened, the strength mustered, began stirring a storm while it waved heavily. Ye Chong put his ounces of strength in it, hush... the air around started streaming towards the center of the gale he stirred, which then transformed into a high spinning cut. Shush... The sudden pull coming from his spin defogged a tiny area around him, a blanked zone in the dusty storm, The scenery near Ye Chong had been cleared up temporarily.

The monochrome vision became much clearer as few crossing white lines had defined Ye Chong's view.

His left arm moved once more, with neither hesitation nor distraction, without either inaccuracy or unnecessary gestures, he smashed upon the hurricane he formed, before the dust had fallen. The violently torn air splashed upon the area, as dust once again camouflaged Ye Chong.

The technique he used was part of the inspiration he got during his practice of unarmed combats, as he realized such movement could produce a powerful conglomerating effect upon the air in the surrounding. Well, he did not expect it to be this effective when he carried it out on the Guardian.

The loud sound was obviously from a mech. No time to waste, as Ye Chong tipped the mech on his toes and fired himself backwards. He did not care if he was heading into a wall or whatever, as he knew the foe was a done for within a glance, since he had destroyed the engine of the foe just now with his blow.

He sprinted again, desperately running towards the outside. The landscape had always provided him additional aid when he needed it, ironically the current landscape was nothing more than an obstacle course for Ye Chong's runaway. He would need to get as

far as possible before...

Boom! The thunderous explosion occurred behind Ye Chong, as the strong momentum raided the place in waves. Ye Chong, not managed to get into a safe zone, was lifted by the shockwave caused by the explosion. The Guardians body was petite and light, Ye Chong inside it only felt a brutal force tossing him to the far corner.

Fortunately his flesh was coated by the Guardian, he remained intact despite the heavy fall. But the explosion gave him a shocker. Man... this guy's explosion was a little bit more than I expected...

Ye Chong got up from the ground, feeling a little disappointed of the long-anticipated first battle he had with the mech. It seemed like the mechs from Freedom Alliance weren't something compared to the 3 forces, the energy stability was poorly developed. From my experience, there won't be such dramatic explosion even if the engine of the mechs of the 3 forces were shot. Commented Ye Chong in his mind, being a mech expert himself.

???

Ye Chong had his mouth open when he saw the huge dentation on the ground. The explosion had wiped out the surrounding residence. That was not the reason for his opened mouth, rather it was the mechs that appeared right next to the dentation, around ...

Nineteen?! There were 19 mechs? Including the one I smashed, there would be 20 of them.

They actually sent 20 mechs to finish me? This is too much... Or did they discover my true identity, that's why the hassle? Or mechs on this planet were actually this cheap?

He had seen this model on primary planet. Those broad muzzles and combative weapons over the body, there were even ancient lances, magnetic blades... some were too weird to be recognized by Ye Chong.

They were cool on designs but they seemed rather graceless at the moment as being alarmed by the unforeseen explosion, which they remained confused of what had happened. The Guardian's anti-detection system had done a brilliant job in this situation. Judging by their reaction, those men were unaware of Ye Chong's existence, yet.

This was the first encounter with the Freedom Alliance and within the first 5 minutes Ye Chong could already see the lack of experience of fight against an actual mech as well as the necessary anti-detection mechanism. Those were the basics and if it was one of the three forces they would have changed to Photon Mode and seen Ye Chong immediately.

With its barely 2 meter height, being in an area with such complicated landscape while utilizing its superior anti-detection mechanism, the chance of it being discovered would be drastically low.

And Ye Chong did not intend to remind them of his existence. This is obviously a good chance to run. I would be a fool if I stayed here and waved at them, saying "Hello I'm here!".

What he had done was evidently horrible. It felt like he had poked the wrong beehive as he saw the alarming situation after he scurried out of the residence zone, with flocks and flocks of their mechs flying in the sky. The mech seemed to be the unmodified, standard model for Freedom Alliance. The number though, it gave Ye Chong another shock, which convinced him why the Freedom Alliance, despite its lack of experience and technology, would not shun the war with the 3 forces. Are they playing the number game? But from where they could get pilots this many? Mechs are a mere issue to be resolved by manufacturing, but you can't manufacture pilots! Ye Chong understood the fact well.

So who Qiu Man really is in the Freedom Alliance? I'm not buying the fact that the hassle they took was merely because of a random employee's broken hand.

There were always time and place for this but not now.

Ye Chong, after observing the situation, deduced his defeat if he were to run to the opening now, as being swarmed upon by the mechs. He would be so dead even if the Guardian was godly.

Beep...

Ye Chong quickly dialed the modified communicator.

"Ye. It seemed like you have caused something?" Mu's flat voice sounded a little teasing for some reason but Ye Chong felt very much relaxed as judging by his tone, Ye Chong was not at a dead end yet.

"Yeah, I must admit, that woman is a nasty one to handle," confessed Ye Chong, with his expression illustrating helplessness. "I swear Shang would enjoy doing this if he was there." Thought Ye Chong to himself so suddenly for some reason.

"As statistics had shown, women have a significantly higher pointer of danger than men. Probably only Shang would be very interested in this. Mhm, Ye, this would be the optimum escape path I planned based on the situation just now. You only have 10 minutes at most. The probability of our communication being decoded by the enemies is very high," reminded Mu.

Ye Chong quickly memorized his escape path. It took him 10 seconds to do so, well the scouting he made in the city for the past few days was not for nothing, as every street and alley had already been imprinted in his mind. Since he was informed of the threatening existence of a super Maverick, he was pressure to be very, very well-prepared, although he did not really expect all these preparatory works would come in handy this soon. Even though...

Runaway? I'm running again? Am I going to run for the rest of my life? Sighed Ye Chong, as he leaped his steps, going for another runaway.

Chapter 251: The Chase III

"Grandpa! I never asked you to touch him!" said Qiu Man, making a rather cutesy rant like a little girl, contrary to her mature self. Her face reddened in adorable annoyance was somewhat appealing.

"Hmph. That fella wanted to touch my granddaughter? I think he wanted to die, that's why. You have never been touched by anybody ever since you were young, and this damned fool actually snapped your hand? I don't feel right if I don't grind him a thousand times." Inside the projection of a communicator on the wall, a white haired elderly was throwing a demonstration to his precious.

This was Qiu Man's grandfather, known as Qiu Yuanlie. His beloved granddaughter lost her parents in an accident back then when she was much younger. So she had spent her childhood, her adolescence, her adulthood with her grandfather. It took him a moment of consideration before he accepted his granddaughter's proactive request to head out to work. And that research center happened to be her practice zone.

Seeing her grandfather throwing such tantrum, Qiu Man was silent, knowing the temper of her grandfather. This man whose name was Takano would probably be a part of the deceased record soon. No one else recognized the actual power of her grandfather as much as she did.

Seeing his granddaughter's ignorance, Qiu Yuanlie displayed ignorance. His granddaughter had been rather rebellious these few years so it would be a good opportunity to let her taste her own medicine.

But that did not mean that Ye Chong would be spared. How dare that ignorant kid fractured my girl Man's hand! This is barbaric! My beloved Man had never been hurt since I had been in charge!

Not even a scratch! And this is what I am proud of. And now, despite all my efforts, there's this someone who jumped out of the bush and make things happen. This is disgusting! I felt my heart wailing when I imagined my granddaughter having her hand cracked! Ughhhh!

It took quite some time for Qiu Yuanlie to cool off. Sitting in his own office, he wondered how he would handle that bull in a museum whose name went by Takano!

Wait, Takano? Flinched Qiu Yuanlie, as the name rang a bell. I seemed to have seen this name before. My beloved Man seemed to have requested me to investigate on someone, was it this fella? But I did not really take note of her request, I just passed it to my men. So who exactly is this Takano? For he could snap my Man's hand? I understood the captivating charm of my granddaughter, that even those boys from the wealthy family went constantly mesmerized over her. And he actually was able to do that to Man?

He took a glance at Takano's profile, his face tightened as he saw nothing peculiar about this man. Takano seemed to be just like the others. Everything was clear and straightforward. "But too straightforward..." he whispered. The elderly, being one who had been working as the intelligence of the leading organization, how could he not see the oddness in this profile?

It was too perfect, a concise and concrete flawlessness, no one would have suspected the profile, not even Qiu Yuanlie himself if without experience. And that was his concern, the profile was unquestionably too perfect.

This person, was not like the others at all...

He quickly browsed for the recording on the day Man got her hand broken. He could not have Man by his side forever, but with his capabilities, Man could be under his protection 24/7. As long as he was willing to do it for his granddaughter, Man could remain in his vigilance for the rest of his life. Qiu Yuanlie stared at the

hologram projection. The happening was only a record of about 20 seconds but it took Qiu Yuanlie 10 minutes to watch it, as he continuously readjusted the angle of view, trying to grab as much details as possible.

His eyes lustered.

This man, is indeed, not a simple person.

It was a speculation from him out of intuition at first and now, from the visuals, he could confirm his belief. This man had demonstrated his combative skills through that snap. He must be an expert of it. And what gave him a sense of danger was the eyes of Takano's eyes the moment when Man approached him by her hand. The shrinkage of his pupils exerted a powerful bloodthirstiness. I had seen a person like this before. Only those men who had experienced wars and had gained the fighting intuition would wield such eyes.

And he had only met a few persons like this in his organization.

So a man like this must not be as simple as his profile had stated. That sense he gained from wars was not something that could be replicated easily. He knew his men well enough. To be honest, the fact that Freedom Alliance was able to fight equally with the other 3 forces was merely because of a majority aid provided by the intelligences. So he believed in the capabilities of his men. They should have identified such a simple fraud within the profile itself since the beginning. But they did not, which could only mean... the information from the residence center itself was already a fake from the start.

Hmm... this is getting really fun. Though Qiu Yuanlie as he laid his hand over the table, with the index finger tapping the surface, he smiled coldly. He could basically confirm that this man by the name of Takano was up for something when he got into the research center.

But... that research unit was a mere training ground for Man. It

was empty and acted as a living stage for Man's career from the time it was founded. So the elderly felt strange.

Assuming this man with the name "Takano" was a spy sent by the other 3 forces, well... he seemed to be a little too foolish to be a spy. The elderly shook his head, as he discarded this ridiculous thought. He had talked to his colleagues countless times, he knew the ounces in each force well enough.

Then, which side do this fella belong? What's his plan? Of all things, out of his habit gained from his occupation, Qiu Yuanlie actually thought these at first.

Oh wait, should I be asking these first? Realized, he laughed, for labelling himself being overthinking. Well I would meet that fella soon enough, everything would open up itself when I asked him in person. I had sent 20 pilots for him. I mean if those pilots could not even capture a single man, they could be flushed down to the blackhole, especially when none of the information on Takano's profile indicated him being a pilot, he seemed to be more likely a martial arts practitioner to me.

Well, even if he was in fact a skillful pilot, he could never run away. Thought so, he connected his communicator and requested all war units to undergo Level 2 Security protocol.

Am I doing too much? Yuanlie, you are a little hot-headed sometimes. Hah... Teased himself as he giggled. But his smile froze soon after, as he thought of something.

It was a problem ... a potentially fatal issue! Okay, given that the person has the ability to alter the database of the residence information center itself, that person could very much be a top Maverick. Qiu Yuanlie staggered, as nobody knew the capabilities of a top Maverick more than himself, since he was in fact, a Maverick himself.

Only the Maverick could understand the Maverick.

A knock on the door resounded in his room.

Chapter 252: The Chase IV

"Come in," Qiu Yuanlie's voice sounded solemn and dignified.

In came three large men, all looking pale as they squirmed under Qiu Yuanlie's scrutiny. Qiu Yuanlie was an intense character, and was very strict towards his subordinates, so they were all respectful towards him.

Qiu Yuanlie was a worldly person, and frowned upon the sight of his subordinates. He asked lowly, "Trouble?"

Seeing Qiu Yuanlie's frown, the three of them felt a sudden chill in their hearts. They exchanged glances, and finally the man who stood in the middle braced himself and answered, "Yes."

"Tell me more," Qiu Yuanlie picked up the bitter pine wood carved teacup from his table and sipped carefully, looking at ease with himself, unhurried and not as intense as he was.

The trio were encouraged by the lack of reprimands from Qiu Yuanlie, knowing that they had been spared. They quickly reported the situation in exaggerating fashion.

They did not see the enemy, only just beginning to go into a surrounding formation when the enemy moved first, as though anticipating their movements. The attack came without warning, and was very powerful, instantly destroying one Aren mech, which ended in an explosion. The sudden explosion caught the other mechs off guard. Chaos ensued, and their target took this opportunity to escape from their enveloping formation.

The target's mech was unknown. His attack strategy was unknown. His whereabouts were unknown.

At this point, the trio could not help but blush out of embarrassment of their failure.

Qiu Yuanlie kept silent. The target's abilities were beyond his expectations. However, knowing that he was supported by a

capable Maverick, it was not strange for him to realize their plans beforehand. The fact that the target could destroy an Aren with a single hit was surprising to him. Aren was the Alliance's special made battle mech, armed with powerful weapons for close and long range distances. While its armaments were a little inferior compared to that of the Three Forces, it was comparable in other respects. Hence, Aren was impressive in the battlefield.

Aren mech pilots were systematically trained by the Alliance. They had to be excellent in shooting and mech combat. In one-on-one battles, Aren mechs would fare well against any of the mechs from the Three Forces. Average mechs could not hope to win against an Aren - only the Sanctuary's Darn, Black Cove's Stellar Flare and the MPA's Messenger were on the same level. To destroy an Aren with one hit, then escape from the attack formation of a squad of 19 Arens - that was only achievable with an advanced mech from any of the Three Forces, most probably one of their trump cards.

All these thoughts flashed through Qiu Yuanlie's mind in the blink of an eye.

The combined power of a trump card and a Maverick was not insignificant.

Qiu Yuanlie waved, signalling his subordinates to leave. The three felt like they were magnanimously forgiven, and quickly left Qiu Yuanlie's room.

The use of the Alliance's trump cards was a hassle, but that was never Qiu Yuanlie's intention. No matter how strong a trump card was, it could not win against numbers. The Freedom Alliance had an important advantage over the Three Forces, and that was their strength in numbers.

Once he activated Level Two Emergency protocol, it would not be easy even for a trump card to leave this city unnoticed. However, with a capable Maverick's assistance, Qiu Yuanlie's efforts would

not be enough.

"A Maverick ..." Qiu Yuanlie's eyes glowed intensely. A Maverick can only be stopped by another Maverick.

It had been about two decades since he had last seen action himself. The thought of his glorious days in the virtual world long ago made his blood boil with vigor. In just the blink of an eye, 20 over years had passed! Qiu Yuanlie felt a touch sentimental.

It had been over 20 years ago since he did something of grand significance for the Alliance. The mission was difficult, but he had accomplished it flawlessly. It was his flawless performance that won him the position of the Intelligence Division's General soon after. He held the position for two decades. Aside from the early years since he joined, he had improved the Division to the point where he rarely needed to do things himself anymore. For more than a decade ever since, he had never been in the field. Even when the Three Forces become exposed to the world earlier, he stayed behind the scenes.

While it had been more than a decade, this did not mean that he had grown weak. Everyday, he spent long hours researching in computations. Compared to his younger self, he was no longer as imaginative, but now, he was infinitely better at rigorous computations.

It looked like it's time for him to enter the field!

Fortunately, Ye Chong had investigated the city in detail to the point where he could memorize the local geography, else Mu's proposed escape route would have been wasted on him.

For now, Ye Chong had already broken through his 18th wall. To avoid the enemy's patrols, Ye Chong had to move through people's homes. Of course, meeting the inhabitants was unavoidable, but Ye Chong always hit them unconscious before they could react to his presence. Thanks to Ye Chong's earlier efforts in learning biology, he had a better grasp of how to make someone

unconscious efficiently.

Killing was not pleasant business, and Ye Chong was not bloodthirsty. He did not know of alternatives in his early days, but now that he had choices, most of which were more efficient and effective, there was no longer the need to kill.

Looking at the time, Ye Chong had taken three minutes to reach where he was now. If all went well, he would reach Coxcomb in another 10 minutes. Once he entered Coxcomb, he would be safe. Coxcomb was now armed to the teeth. Moreover, with its new engines and firepower, escape would not be too difficult.

Ye Chong thought as he ran without slowing down.

Another wall was upon him, and Ye Chong punched straight into it without hesitation.

Crack! A soft sound, followed by a crack that spreaded out like a spiderweb.

Ye Chong paused. The first 18 walls he dismantled were all crushed with his fists. Ye Chong's punches may look like normal, but they were powered by energy manipulation techniques from the Lan Family of September, and were very powerful. More importantly, using this technique to break through walls would not be too noisy.

However, this wall only yielded slightly with a crack. The expected hole in the wall was not to be.

Ye Chong reached forward and lightly knocked on the wall. The composite material came crumbling down like raindrops. Ye Chong was startled, and quickly began to move. His hands were everywhere, catching all the crumbling pieces that fell from the wall.

He caught the pieces, then placed them softly on the ground. Ye Chong's figure moved in a blur.

The entire process was silent. Ye Chong was thankful that his

hands were fast enough, or the pieces falling to the ground would have alerted the people in the house. However, even with Ye Chong's speed, the crumbling pieces strained him to his limit.

The entire process was over in less than 10 seconds, but Ye Chong was already drenched in sweat.

Luckily, he did not miss any of the pieces.

Ye Chong breathed in deeply a few times and calmed his breathing. The situation was over quickly, but it had drained Ye Chong a lot. It was even more tiring than breaking through the first 18 walls.

Looking beyond the wall, however, Ye Chong groaned.

It was an alloy wall! A solid alloy wall was sandwiched between two walls made of average composite material. This kind of security would only be available in powerful families. Since they spent this much effort in walls, it was only natural that there would be guards in the house.

This was a problem for Ye Chong. Now was not a good time for battle. Ye Chong believed that if his punch was slightly louder, he would now be overcome by an overwhelming swarm of mechs.

However, according to Shang's route, he had to pass through this place. Ye Chong ran to a window, carefully peering outside. There were many mechs outside, way more than he expected. There were also a few unfamiliar models. Ye Chong quickly retreated from the window.

It looked like the inhabitants beyond the wall must be someone influential and powerful. While he did not know exactly who it was, the fact was clear as day.

Ye Chong was troubled.

However, there was no time to hesitate. In fact, he had no choice. If he did not reach Coxcomb in 10 minutes, then he would surely die here.

In another battlefield, the action was also heating up.

The atmosphere inside Coxcomb was tense. Everyone stayed in the control room. Little Rock sat solemnly behind the photon processor, data flowing out of the machine like a waterfall. If Ye Chong was there, he must thought it looked very familiar.

Soon, the information displayed before Little Rock stopped refreshing, and transformed into a hive-like network. Little Rock went into action - he must help Mu do some calculations. Little Rock's talent in computations was approved by Mu. To win Mu's approval and work alongside him, showed just how impressive Little Rock's achievements were in this field.

Days of working together allowed Little Rock and Mu to cooperate rather seamlessly. They communicated through the photon processor without speaking a word. The entire control room was silent, and tension was thick. Lian Yue could only watch helplessly, no longer in the mood for his own research. Even if he wanted to, all of Coxcomb's photon processor were now used by Mu to defend against this super powerful Maverick.

Lian Yue paced around the room anxiously.

Zhu Ling sat quietly with her eyes closed, deep in meditation. Beside her, Overwing stood like a guardian angel.

Confrontation was imminent!

Chapter 253: Counterstrike I

Ye Chong deployed Guardian. Before he came to this wall, the territory was difficult for Guardian to move about. The black-and-white vision would make it hard for Ye Chong to study his surroundings, hence he had chosen to withdraw Guardian. However, with this wall in front of him, Guardian would be more suitable to break through. Besides, Ye Chong did not want to be defenseless without Guardian when he reached the other side. Who knew what was behind this wall?

As long as he was piloting Guardian, he would at least not be completely helpless.

Guardian shone with a dazzling gold, its black-white eyes looked like they could see through a person's soul. Ye Chong was wearing a tight fitting spacesuit, his balanced and slender figure apparent from the outside. The soft metallic mask fitted perfectly on Ye Chong's face, showing his facial expression clearly. The golden mask and black-white eyes had steely angles, giving Ye Chong a cold and eerie look.

Ye Chong moved without hesitation, withdrawing his two daggers. Every second was precious to him, a matter of life and death.

Swish swish! Ye Chong's hands were so fast it was hard to follow with one's eyes. Silently, a square hole was carved out of the alloy door.

Ye Chong looked at the hole in the alloy wall, impressed. The daggers did not disappoint him, with such astonishing sharpness!

Du Yun leaned against the door, yawning lazily as he looked at the Aren mechs outside on full alert.

"Tsk tsk, these days, you can see all sorts of people out there," Du Yun sighed to himself. Today, he heard that a man had broken

Lady Qiu Man's hand. In fact, he did not quite believe the news at first. Lady Qiu Man had a fragile body, it was not impossible that she hurt her hand. However, if the news said that it was caused by a man, then it was only natural for him to feel suspicious.

What an extraordinary beauty! Her flawless features and lively eyes were so enchanting, no man would dare to hurt her. Du Yun's heart raced. A woman like this was every man's dream lover, and Du Yun was no exception. However, he knew that it was impossible for him to win her over. Besides, backing her was the old man Qiu. The old fellow's terrible temper was enough to dampen Du Yun's fantasy of that beautiful woman.

Best if he kept to his own business. However, it seemed that Lady Qiu Man was really injured ... He turned back to look into the house. The woman was as obstinate as her grandfather, choosing to stay at this kind of place. While security measures were taken, this place would not guarantee her safety. However, looking at the swarm of mechs outside, he realized that there were mechs patrolling everywhere outside the house. There was also him guarding the house. There should be no problems.

He had just received orders earlier to be here and protect Lady Qiu Man.

To him, it was definitely a golden opportunity. Du Yun imagined that should something happened, he would be able to prove himself. If he could win Lady Qiu Man's approval, that would be most wonderful. However, looking at the tight security outside, Du Yun did not think anyone would be foolish enough to make trouble here.

"Perhaps, today's only going to be routine work," Du Yun mocked himself inside.

Suddenly, Du Yun froze. His cynical attitude earlier was all gone, his expression turned serious as he tilted his head like he was listening for something. As the Freedom Alliance's advanced mech

pilot, he was much stronger than the average mech pilot. This was the reason he was assigned to be here.

He heard a faint but dull sound. If it was some other normal person, they would have thought they heard wrong. However, Du Yun knew better. True experts were confident of their own abilities.

What followed was utter silence.

Du Yun's expression turned grimmer still. He quickly deployed his mech.

Du Yun's mech was silver with a dull, matte surface, giving off a rustic and steady feel. Compared to Aren's 15-meter high build, this mech looked more compact. From the exterior, it looked like a close range mech, complete with a shield and laser sword. The only eye-catching feature was a blood red chain wrapping its upper half body. It looked like red chainmail on the mech. At the ends of the chain were two metal spheres covered with barbs. On the bulging parts of its shoulders were two concealed shooting chambers, storing powerful energy weapons. This allowed the mech to be capable of close and long range combat.

Du Yun's mech was quite famous in the Freedom Alliance, with the pleasant name Windchime. The mech pilots around Du Yun saw him deploying his mech, and were all curious. They did not notice anything amiss. However, with Du Yun's reputation, no one doubted him. Since Du Yun made his move, everyone instantly felt a sense of foreboding.

However, the absence of a target made them all nervous and confused.

Du Yun had no time to waste on explaining. He quickly climbed up into Windchime's pilot cabin. From the mech's weapons, it was clear that the Freedom Alliance's mech pilots were all trained in close and long range combat. Close range combat was compulsory for all their mech pilots. As an elite member, Du Yun's strength in

this field was apparent. Climbing into his mech's pilot cabin was the quickest way to get there.

Once he was inside, Du Yun hesitated no further and rushed inside the house.

Windchime may be a lot smaller than Aren, but it was still over 10 meters tall. The room's door would not fit the mech. However, Du Yun had no time for such trivialities. That faint sound he heard did not bode well. Suddenly, he realized where the enemy might be escaping to.

D*mn it!

Even the reinforced walls could not stand against Windchime's impact. Bang! The wall crumbled into pieces, and Windchime swiftly made its way into the room. All the mech pilots standing outside stared at Du Yun's baffling and crazy reaction, unable to grasp the situation.

The people inside the room were also alarmed by his actions.

Standing behind Qiu Man, Guang's hollow eyes now shone brightly. He quickly stepped before Qiu Man, moving too fast for the human eye to follow. Qiu Man only heard a thunderous crash and almost immediately, Guang was already in front of her.

Windchime's impact had caused the many composite and alloy pieces to fly towards Qiu Man.

Du Yun groaned. He was too focused on the enemy that he had forgotten Lady Qiu Man was defenseless. Before he could react any further, Guang was already standing before Qiu Man, reaching outwards with his hands, easily deflecting all the wall fragments flying towards him away to the other corners of the room. None of the fragments hit Guang, and Qiu Man, standing behind him, was unharmed.

Du Yun heaved a sigh of relief. He now knew that the man with hollow eyes, following Lady Qiu Man around like a puppet was

actually an expert. Even he was impressed by the middle-aged man's moves. While he could have deflected the fragments as well, he would not be able to do it so easily.

Just then, the situation turned for the worse!

Wham! It was another loud crash. The wall to the right of Du Yun crumbled into dust, as the fragments flew towards him.

Du Yun was at least a veteran, and did not panic despite the surprise. With the middle-aged man here, these fragments would not harm Lady Qiu Man.

Du Yun's did not leave the controls. In fact, when he first stepped into the room, he was already in a high state of alertness.

Suddenly, Du Yun's eyes widened. A two-meter square of metal plate was mixed amongst the fragments, and was flying straight towards Lady Qiu Man. This was a huge metal plate, moving at high speed. If anyone was hit by it, the victim would definitely be reduced to broken flesh and bones. Even if he was confident of the middle-aged man's abilities, Du Yun dared not take the risk.

His hands danced across the controls.

The blood red chain that wrapped around Windchime's body like a poisonous serpent suddenly raised its head and struck out! It moved swiftly, overtaking the metal plate. The barbs on the metal sphere's barbs shone like a snake's poisonous fangs.

Ding!

The sharp clang of metal against metal was painful to the ear. The metal plate was hit, and diverged from its course, flying off to the side. However, with her ears unprotected, Qiu Man's face writhed in pain.

Du Yun was intensely alert. Up until now, the enemy had not showed himself. However, when he saw his metal sphere hit the metal plate, he felt a little relieved.

However, just 0.1 seconds after his barbed metal sphere hit the metal plate, Du Yun saw a shadow move past him. A golden figure suddenly appeared behind the two-meter square metal plate, moving so quickly that Du Yun only caught a blur of a shadow.

Du Yun was shocked! That was fast!

The golden figure suddenly pressed against the wall. At that moment, a minute pause in its movements allowed Du Yun to finally make out the golden figure clearly.

This person was wearing a weird gold-coloured tight suit, that covered even his face. The odd metallic gold luster seemed like soft-textured material, showing the wearer's facial expressions clearly. The black-white eyes on the gold mask were a striking visual contrast.

Du Yun felt a sudden chill in him for no apparent reason! He did not know that those black-white eyes would carve themselves deep into his memories!

The gold figure suddenly stopped moving, and adopted a strange posture. It bent its legs and pushed one hand against the wall, looking like a tightly drawn bow.

Not good! Du Yun immediately gauged the enemy's intention. His expression twisted as he moved quick as lightning to prepare himself!

Chapter 254: Counterstrike II

In truth, Ye Chong never expected to see Qiu Man behind the wall. While everything had happened because of this woman, Ye Chong did not hate her. To him, Qiu Man was only a woman, albeit more dangerous than the others he had met. Now, she was probably his enemy.

Nonetheless, Qiu Man was not so dangerous a threat compared to that silver mech.

Ye Chong was no longer as oblivious as he was before. When meeting enemies, Ye Chong would study them closely. In just a split second, Ye Chong understood the situation.

These people were protecting that woman!

Ye Chong came through and reached another wall very quickly. However, in that short time span, the silver mech's performance was enough to catch his eye.

The other party was obviously an expert. Whether it was his skills or predicting his own movements, the man was capable. That sphere-on-chain weapon was the first Ye Chong had ever encountered, but that did not stop him from admiring its dexterous usage.

Ye Chong was not the only one. Few could actually name the weapon today. The morningstar was a lesser known weapon even in ancient times, and it looked strange in the hands of a mech.

Since it was difficult to master, requiring special maneuvering techniques, not many could actually use the weapon today.

Fortunately, Ye Chong never underestimated his enemies, much less when facing a weapon he had never seen or heard of. Flexible, fast, unpredictable - these were Ye Chong's immediate conclusions about the weapon.

Ye Chong had innate talent in the battlefield.

In that moment when he broke through the wall and saw the silver mech, Ye Chong knew that Mu's escape route would not work out. Mu's plan depended on him not drawing any attention. Now that Qiu Man was here, and this silver mech, Ye Chong knew that it would be impossible to run away unnoticed. Besides, there were many other mechs guarding outside.

Fortunately, Ye Chong was adaptable. The best option now would be to get to their leader. With an important figure in his hands, the enemy would not dare to touch him. With this thought in mind, his eyes wandered to Qiu Man, wearing a flustered expression.

The woman was the perfect hostage in all respects.

Ye Chong crouched near the wall like a golden frog, eyeing Qiu Man intently. His bent legs gave him power to launch him forward like a golden arrow, heading straight towards the woman!

Du Yun's eyes went red with tension! Just as Ye Chong left the wall, he issued the commands to attack. Another morningstar flew towards the space between Ye Chong and Qiu Man, the sharp barbs on the weapon looking menacingly bloodthirsty.

Ye Chong saw a blurred movement, and the morningstar was already in front of him, covered with some frightening looking barbs. Ye Chong was flying too quickly. If he crashed into the morningstar, even Guardian would not keep him alive.

However, he was now suspended midair, with no physical support to redirect himself. Impact was inevitable. Besides, this was his chance. Once the mechs outside came in, his plan of capturing Qiu Man as hostage would fail. This meant that his chances of escaping would diminish to an insignificant figure.

Even against an enemy, Ye Chong could not help but comment on the silver mech's pilot for this clever attack.

However, Ye Chong was not one to give up, ever!

Ye Chong was flying too fast! The morningstar grew larger and larger in his eyes, until he could see the chilling light reflecting off its sharp barbs. The more dangerous it was, the more he should stay calm. Panic would not improve his situation, but hasten his death. Ye Chong's numerous close calls allowed him to stay calm in this deathly situation.

As the morningstar came closer and closer, Ye Chong grew even calmer!

Yes! Now! Ye Chong's eyes shone brightly. His right arm lifted from the side, reaching towards the barbs on the morningstar!

If one could watch this moment in slow motion, it would be a wonderful spectacle. Just before Ye Chong hit the morningstar, his right hand gently grabbed onto one of the barbs on the metal sphere. Unlike Ye Chong's crude entrance earlier, he now moved softly and elegantly like a dancer. Just as his right hand touched the barb, Ye Chong's shoulders and arms expanded as he pulled in his abdomen. His upper body became an upside-down triangular shape.

Every barb on the morningstar was as thick as an adult's arm. Ye Chong's right arm did not seem to push very hard, but his upper body was not bent into an S-shape. Ye Chong pushed gently and flew towards the ceiling.

Du Yun was already shocked to the core! He had thought, right until the point the morningstar met the enemy, that the enemy would not be able to escape. Whether it was the timing or the location, his attack was perfect. If he was the one attacked, he would not be able to avoid it himself.

However, the scene unfolding before him was too shocking! Du Yun was never so surprised before in his life. To him, the golden figure was too intriguing!

To grab onto the barb at such a high speed, and to escape unharmed - heavens, what visual acuity and accuracy it would

take! He saw every detail of that moment, how the enemy had held onto the morningstar and bent his upper body strangely into an S-shape. "Just who exactly am I dealing with?" Du Yun could not help but sigh in dread.

He had fought in many battles, but never had he seen something as extraordinary as this.

In fact, one cannot blame him for his shock. Anyone who saw it would be shocked still. Ye Chong had actually exercised some kind of muscle control technique. To strengthen his arms and shoulders, Ye Chong tucked in his abdominal muscles towards the shoulders, a unique muscle control technique of the Lan family of September. However, Ye Chong had done it so quickly that it created the illusion of his shoulders and arms expanding and his abdomen shrinking.

Under normal circumstances, if he had on his clothing, his muscle transformation would not have been visible to observers. However, since Guardian was malleable and tight fitting, that strange transformation was completely seen by Du Yun.

The transformation was a visual shock to anyone who had never seen it before. Even a veteran like Du Yun was momentarily distracted.

Just as Du Yun paused in distraction, Ye Chong had already reached the ceiling. Ye Chong dared not try any direct attacks again. He now knew how dangerous a long distance direct attack like that was, himself suspended midair without any way of changing course. He was essentially defenseless. He pushed his feet lightly against the ceiling towards the wall and returned to the ground.

This was Ye Chong's specialty - short distance direction changes. His trajectory was mind bending to watch. A golden figure with black-white eyes moved in a blur, approaching Qiu Man like a golden lightning strike.

That short burst of muscle transformation had already pushed Ye Chong beyond his limits. His muscle control techniques had not yet reached this level of proficiency, so he was unavoidably injured from the move. Right now, he was no longer as strong as he appeared to be!

The silver mech was already behind Ye Chong. Being so close to Qiu Man, the mech pilot would not dare to use his chain weapon again, not without hurting Qiu Man.

From the moment Du Yun appeared in the room, the middle-aged man, Guang seemed to come to life, blocking in front of Qiu Man. He glared at Ye Chong intently, eager for battle!

However, Ye Chong did not want to fight him. Time was precious for him right now. Ye Chong took a step to the side. He moved in a blur, and was beside Qiu Man in the next moment. Ye Chong was good at changing directions like that, and with Guardian's strength, he reached Qiu Man easily.

Du Yun was growing anxious and furious. With the enemy so near Lady Qiu Man, he could not interfere. Besides, the opponent was cunning, moving around here and there even faster than before, making it difficult to aim at him. If Lady Qiu Man was not there, he would have used heavy fire, but now he could only watch and wait.

The only thing he could do was pray that the middle-aged man with Lady Qiu man could handle the enemy.

Guang's eyes were full of life, a strong contrast to their initial hollowness. He seemed to finally and truly come into existence! Ye Chong did not want to fight Guang. While he did not know who Guang was, their few encounters earlier made Ye Chong aware that the man was a combat expert.

Guang took a sidestep, and Qiu Man was once again behind him.

Ye Chong switched positions a few more times, but Guang was

always able to stand between him and Qiu Man. Ye Chong was growing impatient. He realized that if he did not go pass this middle-aged man called Guang, he would not be able to achieve his goal.

Ye Chong no longer hesitated. He lunged forward towards Guang!

Chapter 255: Counterstrike III

Guang's eyes shone brightly. His left hand moved to distract, but his right hand turned into a fist and came straight towards Ye Chong.

Ye Chong was overjoyed, and met Guang's right fist with his. Strength was always Ye Chong's forte. His physical strength was also top class, enough to surprise even Mu and Shang. Besides, he was a practitioner of the September Lan family's muscle control technique, where strength amplification was an important part of it. With Guardian's support, Ye Chong's punch was packed with so much power that even he himself would not take it lightly.

It seemed that the fastest way to finish this was with brute force.

Guang did not evade, his features dancing with fiery vigour.

Crack!

Guang's right arm exploded into a rain of flesh and bones, like it had been hit with a mech head on. His right arm was completely useless now. With such a serious injury, even the best available medical treatment would not be able to restore it. If one were to dissect Guang's right arm, you would see that the bones in his arm had all crumbled into numerous minute fragments. Ye Chong's punch was powerful and astonishing.

At the same time, Ye Chong felt something warm rush up his throat, and he spitted a mouthful of blood behind Guardian's mask. Guang's strength had greatly exceeded Ye Chong's expectations. He tried to steady himself, but his mind was still whirling in an attempt to understand what had happened.

Was this truly something a human body was capable of?

This was terrifying! Ye Chong had never met anyone who could compare with him in terms of physical strength. All these years, his strength seemed to have reached a point of stagnation, and

even Mu and Shang agreed that he must have reached the limits of the human body. Hence, Ye Chong had devoted most of his effort in mastering techniques.

However, this puppet-like middle-aged man had completely shattered Ye Chong's belief. The man was bare-handed, without any tools to aid him. Ye Chong himself had Guardian's protection, and yet he was still injured. The power behind that punch was incredible.

Without Guardian's aid, even if he used the Lan family's amplification technique to the fullest, he would not be able to attack with so much power like Guang. If the man was not right before him now, Ye Chong would not have believed that he was human.

The world was truly full of surprises!

He could only thank his lucky stars that the man was more heavily injured than he was. After receiving such heavy damage, the man would not be able to fight back again.

Ye Chong felt a pressure building in his chest, feeling a little dizzy. "Looks like I'm also hurt bad," Ye Chong laughed bitterly to himself.

He hesitated no longer. Ye Chong lunged at Qiu Man.

Du Yun was stupefied. The gold figure was too powerful. In his eyes, the gold figure and the middle-aged man had only exchanged a single blow, and the so-called expert middle-aged man was gravely injured from it. He did not know that the exchange had left both sides heavily injured. Ye Chong was hurt from the exchange, on top of his injury earlier.

Qiu Man's snow white throat looked so enticing to Ye Chong.

However, at that moment, a single hand blocked Ye Chong's advance. "Guang?" Ye Chong paused, his movements stalled. Guang's expression was unchanged, still as vigorous as it was

before, completely ignoring his injuries and lacking any signs of pain.

How was that possible? Even with Ye Chong's calmness, he almost let out a gasp. With his biology studies, he knew exactly what that kind of injury meant to the victim. It would have been difficult to stay awake, much less continue continuing. The pain would have instantly led to a blackout, while the huge blood loss would not have allowed for further vigorous movements such as combat.

However, Ye Chong was looking at him right now. Guang did not seem ill at ease. If he could not see Guang's right hand hanging beside him uselessly, Ye Chong would not have guessed he was injured.

Ye Chong momentary pause was an opening for Guang. The man's left hand came quickly, trailing upwards from Ye Chong's right arm. When Ye Chong recovered, Guang's left hand had already grasped tightly onto Ye Chong's right hand like some mysterious vine.

Ye Chong was shocked. His left hand came into a fist and went straight for Guang's chest. If Guang did not let go, Ye Chong's attack would kill him.

Guang seemed unfazed, and Ye Chong felt his right arm tighten.

Crack! A faint sound, followed by Ye Chong's pained groan! He felt a powerful grip and sharp pain coming from his right arm.

His bone was broken! The pain was like an adrenaline injection. It had been a long, long while since Ye Chong had been injured again and again.

Sometimes, an injured animal is more terrifying than a calm animal.

Ye Chong instantly saw red! All the emotions suppressed by his calmness erupted. He yelled loudly, left hand delivering a blow on

Guang's chest like a hammer. Ye Chong's punch was much stronger than the last one, and Guang was flung backwards like a sandbag. His chest was sunken, and the sound of bones breaking could be heard clearly in the room.

Ye Chong did not leave him at that. Guang's left hand was still gripping onto his right arm. Ye Chong pulled his right arm, the pain evoking another groan from him, while Guang was once again brought before him.

The elbows, the knees ... Ye Chong's attack came like a storm, raining down onto Guang's entire body. In less than three seconds, Guang's body was beaten to a pulp.

"Huu ..." Ye Chong exhaled deeply, blood still trickling from the edge of his mouth. He finally calmed down. Qiu Man was already frozen in shock. She had been well protected since young, and had never seen bloody scenes like this. Her face was drained of blood, and she finally could not hold it much longer and began to throw up.

Ye Chong turned back to look at the silver mech. The silver mech stood there frozen in place like a puppet.

Du Yun was shocked beyond reason! The two persons before him were not like any human at all. The middle-aged man was practically a maniac, a fearless maniac. The gold figure, on the other hand ... Du Yun shuddered! It was too scary! The middle-aged man was already inhumanly strong, he was sure about this. A master like this was stronger than even those so-called combat instructors. However, this master of masters was beaten to death right before him. Ah, no! This was not just death. The man was now more like a pile of bloody meat. Du Yun wanted to get away from the man as soon as possible. While he had never heard of anyone breaking a mech's armor with their bare hands, Du Yun could still feel a chill as he sat inside his mech.

When the gold figure turned back to look at him, those black-

white eyes looked like the eyes of the God of Death, promising the end of many, many more lives. Du Yun almost lost it.

Ye Chong waited no longer. He dragged Qiu Man, who was still throwing up, over to himself without any care for delicateness. His hand reached and closed around her snow white throat. This was because Ye Chong heard the other mechs coming towards him.

In fact, it was not that the mechs reacted too slowly; it was that everything had happened too fast. From the moment Ye Chong broke through the wall and began fighting with Guang, it was only three seconds. The fight between Ye Chong and Guang was only 10 seconds at most. In these 13 seconds, only the ones present understood the risks and close calls involved.

The other mechs were not as bold as Du Yun, and did not break straight through the wall. Just as they were in a confused state, a golden figure suddenly came out in a flash, and quickly escaped.

The group was shocked, still not understanding the situation, only standing around the doorway.

"You idiots, go after him!" Du Yun roared through the comms. The other mechs were all standing around the doorway, and he could only watch as Ye Chong escaped. In truth, he could do nothing, but pursuit was necessary. The enemy had taken Lady Qiu Man hostage. If any of the fools opened fire ... He shuddered as he thought of facing the old man Qiu should that had happened.

In any case, Lady Qiu Man's life was top priority - Du Yun decided then and there, and quickly went out by breaking through the adjacent wall. He scanned from the air above and finally located the golden figure. Quickly, he gave chase to the enemy.

Ye Chong had already given up on the escape route that Mu designed for him. Given the circumstances, that route was already pointless. Now, he must get onboard Coxcomb as soon as possible. Ye Chong chose the shortest route to his objective.

The gold figure moved so quickly that Du Yun could barely believe his eyes. Even Windchime's engines on full blast could not keep up. If it was the Alliance's Aren mechs, they would only trail from far behind. Du Yun chased as fast as he could as he reported the current situation to the higher-ups.

Ye Chong and Du Yun were both oblivious to the fact that far away, on another battlefield without any traces of firepower, the battle was reaching its climax. Ye Chong's actions had a direct influence on the future of this battlefield.

"Switch the calculation module!" Mu's voice sounded strained like never before, as he continued, "Initiate structural improvements. Reinstall the three lines of defenses."

Sweat trickled down from Little Rock's forehead, but he dared not be distracted. His eyes were staring straight ahead at the ever-changing data on his holographic screen, as he transferred his calculation results to Mu. Suddenly, a handkerchief came and wiped off the beading sweat on his forehead.

Little Rock was startled, and looked up. It was Zhu Ling. He returned a sincere smile, and returned to his calculations. Zhu Ling said nothing, only holding onto the handkerchief as she stood beside Little Rock.

Lian Yue took in the scene with interest. He moved closer to Zhu Ling and began sweetly, "Dear Ling'er, why don't you wipe off my sweat too." He nudged his forehead towards Zhu Ling, which was not sweating at all.

Zhu Ling returned with a look of ridicule and humphed coldly. She raised her leg and kicked Lian Yue hard, sending him flying.

Qiu Yuanlie studied the transformation happening before his eyes, and could not help but be impressed. The opponent was excellent, powerful in his calculations, the traps almost flawless. While he thought they lacked some creativity, but such impressive computation skills would be enough to do as one wished in the

virtual world. This must be the strongest Maverick in computations in the entire virtual world.

Qiu Yuanlie could not help feel a little competitive. Experts were hard to find. He had never needed to do things himself for so long, mostly because there were no worthy opponents.

Computation, decryption, trap setups, assault ... The entire Intelligence Division's resources were directed to him for his disposal. He was now like a general, directing his soldiers and infantry, while his officers were the data that he entered into the system.

The opponent was strong, blocking all his attacks. However, Qiu Yuanlie did not turn hasty. The battle between Mavericks could be won in a split second, but the probing and defense efforts that came before would be long and arduous. Every Maverick must learn to be patient. Beside, no one knew the Rainbow's virtual world like he did. This was his territory for 20 over years. He could reach every corner of the Rainbow's virtual world. Given time, he would be able to find the opponent's weakness.

Infiltrate and counter-infiltrate, attack and defense, diversion and counter-diversion ... The entire battlefield was in a constant state of push-and-pull. In order to prevent wide scale effects, Qiu Yuanlie tried his best to contain the range of the battlefield. However, the side effects were inevitable. Rainbow planet's virtual world was already affected in many places.

Bang bang bang! It was a panicked series of door knocks. Qiu Yuanlie was furious. He had ordered for his subordinates to not disturb him no matter what, and now they had dared to defy him.

Besides, the battle climax was near, and Qiu Yuanlie did not want to be distracted.

Bang bang bang! The knocks came even more urgently.

Qiu Yuanlie was already at the peak of his anger. He would smash

whoever it was to pieces once his battle was over. For now, however, he could only suppress his emotions. He breathed in deeply for a few times to calm himself.

Bang! Someone broke through the door.

"General, bad news! Lady Qiu Man was taken hostage!"

Rumble! Qiu Yuanlie could feel something snap inside his mind. He took off his helmets, revealing bloodshot eyes as he said hoarsely, "What?"

Qiu Yuanlie felt like a tearing off a person's head. The subordinate who came in to report gulped heavily and continued, "According - according to mech pilot Du Yun's re - report, Lady Qiu Man was taken hostage!"

Qiu Yuanlie nearly blacked out. After a long moment, he finally recovered. His voice was bitter and hoarse as he asked, "Is this information reliable?"

"This just came in from mech pilot Du Yun. He's now in pursuit of the enemy." The subordinate stole a quick glance at Qiu Yuanlie's pale face before asking, "Mech pilot Du Yun is requesting further orders. Please advise."

Chapter 256: Counterstrike IV

With a single hand holding Qiu Man, Ye Chong advanced as fast as he could.

It looked like Qiu Man was really someone very important. The mechs standing in his way all avoided him. This allowed Ye Chong to move as fast as he could.

Du Yun was still following Ye Chong tightly from behind. He was now being very careful. The gold figure's crazy strength had left a deep impression in him.

Ye Chong ran, and felt his chest growing warmer, and his breathing disturbed. His injury was not light. Usually, this level of running would be a piece of cake for Ye Chong.

Even with a hostage in hand, Ye Chong dared not be careless. He was now in a very dangerous position, and any mistakes could lead to his death. Besides, it seemed that currently the only expert around was the one following him. Ye Chong knew that Rainbow planet must have more than one person of his caliber. There was no way his opponent's base would be missing capable guards.

"Ye." Ye Chong's comms sounded.

"It's Mu," Ye Chong thought, startled, but immediately felt overjoyed. Mu was contacting him now, meaning that Mu had control over the virtual world.

The truth was about as Ye Chong guessed. With his heart worried for his granddaughter, Qiu Yuanlie could no longer focus in his battle. The combined efforts of Mu and Little Rock had slowly overpowered their opponent. Of course, the entire process was still quite risky. Qiu Yuanlie, the veteran, quickly realized his mistake, but by then he had lost control of the battlefield.

Even so, Qiu Yuanlie had prepared a few impressive traps, intended to turn the tides towards his favor. Fortunately, Mu was

Careful in his calculations and did not give Qiu Yuanlie that opportunity. Understanding the futility of his defense, Qiu Yuanlie still managed to stop Mu from entering any further. All of the Freedom Alliance's classified information were still under his protection.

Ye Chong asked Mu, surprised and happy to hear from him, "Mu, you beat him?"

Mu sounded calm as always, with none of the joy from his triumph, "The opponent made some obvious mistakes, reason unknown."

Ye Chong continued asked, "What's the situation now?"

"Rainbow planet is now in the highest state of emergency. Ye, you had just stirred up the hornet's nest," Mu made a rare joke. Hearing that, Ye Chong felt his tension relieved to some degree.

"I just intercepted their internal orders. Their First, Fourth, Ninth and Thirteenth Contingent Leads are heading in your direction. Estimated time of arrival is between three to eight minutes."

"Contingent Lead?" Ye Chong asked, confused. While this was obviously a title of some sort, Ye Chong could not deduce its implications.

"Contingents are the Alliance's mid-sized combat units. A Contingent Lead is the strongest of their contingent. While they do not issue orders in battle, they are the best of their own contingent, the representative of their own units." The reply came from Qiu Man, whom Ye Chong was carrying under his armpit.

Even in her dangerous situation, Qiu Man still held herself calmly as she explained in her cold voice. Given the circumstances, she knew just how bad it was. She usually behaved in a carefree and playful manner, only because she was in no danger. Now, threatened by death, her intelligence shone through.

Her priority was to make the opponent let down his guard. If that happened, the Alliance's Contingent Leaders would have an opening. However, how can she achieve that? If it were another person, she would have opted for seduction, but this man before her was clearly not that kind of man. The memory of her broken hand was still painful. Even though it healed immediately after treatment, she did not wish to experience that kind of pain again.

The only choice she had now was to cooperate with this d*mned fellow. That way, at least her situation would not be worsened.

In just a short time, Qiu Man had deliberated over these matters.

"That silver mech back there, what's his position in your organization?" Ye Chong asked. While Qiu Man's cooperation struck him as odd, he would not waste this opportunity.

"He's a Contingent Sentinel. Every contingent has seven Sentinels, charged with protecting the commander of their contingent," Qiu Man explained.

"Who's stronger, the Lead or the Sentinel?" Ye Chong asked.

"The Lead, of course, how can the Sentinel hope to compare?" Qiu Man answered as if the answer was obvious.

Ye Chong picked up his speed instantly. The silver mech back there was already a difficult opponent for him, and now he just found out that the Leads were even stronger than Sentinels. From Qiu Man's tone, it seemed that the Leads were far stronger than Sentinels.

With four mechs that were even stronger than the silver mech, and with the silver mech itself following him closely behind, he would not dare to face them even if he was uninjured, much less with his current condition.

Ye Chong suddenly came to a halt. This surprised everyone around him. What was he doing?

Ye Chong quickly deployed Han Jia. With Guardian's aid, he did

not even need to climb the mech. He leaped and stepped on Han Jia's protruding parts before quickly reaching the pilot cabin and entering it.

The guy had a mech!

This came as a shock to the members of the Freedom Alliance. Their target had only wore a golden coloured battle suit all this while, so they had assumed that he was only a very powerful combat expert. Now, it appeared that he was actually a mech pilot.

They were all combatants here, so they knew exactly what this implied!

Besides, it was obvious that the guy's mech was different. Many of the more knowledgeable ones immediately recognized Han Jia and gasped, "A full-skeleton mech! It's a full-skeleton mech! Heavens, there's actually a full-skeleton mech out there ..." Their dispirited expressions were pitiful to watch.

However, someone finally could not help but asked, "Big brother, what's a full-skeleton mech?"

"Young man, clearly you're not civilized. Bet you didn't pay attention in civilization class, now you pay for your ignorance." The man looked condescendingly at the inquirer. Everyone's attention immediately went to him, and this encouraged him and pulled him out of his gloom. He coughed slightly and continued on seriously, "Full-skeleton mechs are mechs made completely out of skeletons. Hmm, you should know that the mutant creatures are growing stronger and stronger. I bet you have experienced them yourselves."

Everyone nodded in agreement. Mech pilots of their level would have crossed paths with mutants at some point in their lives. They fully agreed that mutants were not to be treated lightly.

"These mutants, their skeletons are very strong, some even stronger than alloy materials. More importantly, they're much

lighter than alloys."

The crowd understood then. Someone asked, "If this full-skeleton mech is so good, why don't we have them?"

"Sigh, if only it were that easy! Skeletons are grown naturally, and no two sets of skeletons look the same. Only the most experienced skeleton carvers of skeleton artisans could clearly identify the properties of each skeleton. Heh, in this day and age, where could we find any skeleton carver or artisan? All these years, our organization has only found some half-ass*d skeleton carvers. They can't make even make reliable skeleton parts, much less a full-skeleton mech. However, this is normal, considering that we never heard of the Three Forces making full-skeleton mechs too." The man spoke with a sigh.

"Then why would this guy have a full-skeleton mech?"

The man could not help but roll his eyes at that. "Why don't you ask him yourself?"

Now that they identified him as mech pilot with such a powerful mech, it was only to be expected that mech was not just for ordinary travel.

Soon, news of the man called Gao Ye with his full-skeleton mech spreaded to every corner of the Freedom Alliance. All this while, the higher-ups of the Alliance had been troubled with their disadvantage against the Three Forces. Technological advancements did not come easily. If they did not have their advantage in numbers, they would have been annihilated by the Three Forces.

Soon, orders came from the higher-ups. Lady Qiu Man must be rescued, and the man called Gao Ye must be captured alive. If it were anyone else in Ye Chong's hands, the Freedom Alliance would probably have sacrificed her. Unfortunately, this was Qiu Man, Qiu Yuanlie's only granddaughter. No one dared to even suggest the possibility of sacrificing a single person for the Alliance. As

such, they gathered all the capable combatants to capture Gao Ye alive and rescue Qiu Man.

Ye Chong deployed Han Jia to conserve his strength and to prepare himself against the so-called Contingent Leads. Using Guardian to battle against those mechs would quickly wear him out physically, and physical strength was something he was lacking now due to his injuries.

Once inside the pilot cabin, Ye Chong withdrew Guardian. He once fantasized about controlling Han Jia while wearing Guardian. Wouldn't that increase his strength? After some experimentation, he found it to be the opposite. Guardian's black-and-white vision was only effective against solid objects. Han Jia's holographic scanning results could not be visualized with Guardian's black-and-white vision.

"Ye, I've destroyed Rainbow planet's communication system, but the opponent might have their own internal comms channel." This was reported calmly by Mu, and Qiu Man could only listen in horror. Who was this man? Even for her grandfather, destroying the entire planet's communication system was not an easy task.

"Bad news, Ye, the Second, Third, Fifth, Sixth, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Contingent Leads are all heading in this direction. Estimated time of arrival is between 10 to 15 minutes." Mu sounded more urgent.

Even Qiu Man was a little dazed. By her count, it seemed that besides the 7 or 8 contingents sent out for their own missions, the rest of the Contingent Leads were deployed here. Even with her grandfather's position, it would be impossible to deploy so many Contingent Leads at once. The organization must have found something of value in this man before her. With Qiu Man's upbringing in her family of status, she was keenly sensitive to these matters.

Ye Chong said nothing, but Han Jia had already sped up. From

motionless to Mach 9, Ye Chong took only two seconds. The acceleration evoked another heavy feeling in Ye Chong's chest, injured as he was. Qiu Man, together with him in the pilot cabin, was even worse off. She was bleeding from her nose and mouth, and her face was pale and contorted in pain.

Han Jia was slower than Guardian by a single Mach, but the sky was without obstructions, so Ye Chong's advance was even faster.

Mu cooperated seamlessly. The entire city's traffic was already paralyzed. Mechs were flying around everywhere, confused. The chaos was problematic for the Freedom Alliance.

Ye Chong moved like a fish swimming amongst the coral reef, not slowing down one bit. Compared to the current situation, he had flown through worse territories.

Qiu Man was already unconscious. The acceleration earlier was dangerous for someone without training like her, and possibly even fatal.

This way, however, Ye Chong did not have to worry about her obstructing his piloting.

Mechs were everywhere in the sky, and the full-skeleton mech was nowhere to be seen. After searching for a while, Du Yun finally gave up on this futile mission.

When Han Jia arrived at the docking zone, the Freedom Alliance finally reacted. Mechs flew swiftly towards Ye Chong's location. This was the largest military operation in the history of the Freedom Alliance. They had deployed a grand total of 11 contingents, with all 11 Contingent Leads in the field, and 77 Contingent Sentinels close behind. The number of average combatants was even larger.

Coxcomb's hatch was already wide open. Zhu Ling stood guard by the hatch in Overwing. As she saw Ye Chong approaching, she tilted to the side, and Ye Chong flew straight into the warship. The

hatch closed immediately behind him.

Coxcomb was all ready for flight, and immediately undocked.

In the next moment, the dark red starship delivered a lesson that the Freedom Alliance would never forget.

Chapter 257: What the Future Holds

The dark red Coxcomb was like an awakened maroon-coloured shark, flashing its horrifying teeth. Countless laser guns were activated. The mech pilots from the Freedom Alliance could only see a painfully blinding flash of light.

The millions of laser beams illuminated the skies as bright as day. They bloomed like flowers, and dazzled like fireworks.

The pursuing mech pilots were in no mood to enjoy this beautiful spectacle. They were all scared for their lives. To them, all these thin laser beams were fatal. Usually, laser beams like these were too weak to concern them, and they could take a few hits without considerable damage.

Indeed, the thin laser beams would only leave a shallow dent on their mechs, almost inconsequential for the mechs. However, the density of laser beams they were seeing now was beyond their imagination.

No matter how tough a mech was, it cannot withstand an attack like this. Besides, the laser guns were terrifyingly accurate, and almost never missed.

Boom boom boom! Just as these laser beams left an afterimage in their visions, dozens of mechs were already exploding. The sight of these dozens of mechs all exploding together was staggering, and even the elites of the Free Alliance, who were no stranger to such spectacles, were momentarily lost in the moment.

The rain of lasers did not stop. The explosions continued on here and there, fireballs illuminating the starlit sky like a melody.

Three seconds!

It took only three seconds! All the mechs that entered the attack range of the laser beams were annihilated.

The battlefield fell into a short, awkward silence. The mechs

further away dared not advance. The dark red warship was like a massive beast, staring down at them.

They were only normal laser beams, how could they be so devastating?

With so many laser beam guns, and such an astonishing hit ratio, just how many skilled shooters were there on this warship?

All the mech pilots were shocked.

Just as the masses were lost in the moment, Coxcomb suddenly accelerated and made its escape. While it may seem like Coxcomb had the upper hand now, those onboard this warship knew that they were not out of danger yet.

After all, this was the enemy's base. If this was all the enemy could offer, then they would be unworthy of competing with the Three Forces. Besides, the Alliance had their own warships. If Coxcomb was delayed by their mechs until their warships arrived, then escape would be futile.

Hence, Mu chose to retreat without hesitation.

"Warning, enemy warship incoming!" Mu spoke with alarm, which was rare for the mech.

Tens of black dots appeared on the holographic screen, growing larger. Everyone on the ship felt a chilling fear in their hearts.

"80 of them," Mu presented the result of his rapid calculations.

Everyone on the ship were shocked, including Ye Chong. This can't be right. 80 warships? Did they really send out 80 warships just for their single ship? This was ridiculous!

The enemy's warships approached in battle formation. The dense fleet

of warships was a magnificent sight, and a feast for the eyes. 80 warships! This was a reality that could blow one's mind.

Abruptly, everyone jerked backwards. Coxcomb had accelerated!

Even a fool would realise that they must escape right now. Ye Chong could not imagine why the enemy would send out 80 warships for him. Looking down at Qiu Man, lying on the floor, Ye Chong could not help but felt curious. Who was she really, that the Freedom Alliance would send out 80 warships for her?

"They're surrounding us!" Zhu Ling gasped as she realised the fleet's intention.

Ye Chong looked up. Some tens of mechs were already breaking away, flying off into the distance, probably wanting to outflank Coxcomb.

There were 13 of them, by Ye Chong's count.

These 13 mechs flew surprisingly fast. Two of them were even faster than Zhu Ling's Overwing. The rest of them were at least on par with Guardian. These 13 mechs were all aggressive and ready to kill.

If Qiu Man was awake, she would have recognised all 13 mechs. 11 of them were the Freedom Alliance's celebrated Contingent Leads, out of 13 in total. The other two were even stronger, but known by fewer. Qiu Man was one of the few. They were the Alliance's rarely deployed Vanguards. The Vanguards of the Freedom Alliance were the equivalent of the Trump Cards of the Three Forces. Now that the Freedom Alliance had sent out all of their best, it would be humiliating if they could not capture Coxcomb.

One of the two mechs was a non-humanoid mech, shaped like a scorpion, but much more powerful than Ye Chong's Sand Scorpio. These two mechs flew the fastest, leading the rest of the mechs.

However, these 13 mechs were wary of Coxcomb's laser beam attack, and had to make a huge detour around the warship.

"Everyone, please fasten your seatbelts, we're going to make a warp jump," Mu declared calmly.

Ye Chong was surprised. A warp jump? A warp jump required a

long distance to accelerate, and the ship cannot be disturbed throughout the jump if the passengers were to remain safe.

However, Ye Chong quickly calmed himself. Mu's decisions were always the best results derived from his computations.

Zhu Ling was also surprised. She looked over to Little Rock, and calmed down as well. Little Rock seemed calm; he must have arrived at the same computation result as Mu. Only Lian Yue was as white as a sheet, putting his hands together in a prayer, muttering under his breath.

When they first arrived on Rainbow planet, Mu had already chosen a few points for warp jumps as their retreat options. Now, they were heading for one of those points.

Suddenly, Ye Chong recalled the time when he sat in Mu's pilot cabin as they escaped from the trash planet. They were facing a similarly unknown future, full of potential disasters. However, Ye Chong was feeling very much at peace. There was no panic or fear. After the initial surprise, Ye Chong quickly accepted his situation.

From his many close encounters with death, Ye Chong learned not only to appreciate life, but also to not fear death.

The war jump point would bring them to a place in the Csebesini Galaxy. Once they made this warp jump, they would be safe.

No one would make a warp jump without careful computations. A tiny mistake might send you to a far off and unfamiliar territory. You may never find your way back.

The universe is vast, and humanity will never reach its ends. The Five Galaxies may be large, but compared to the size of the universe, it was just a speck of dust.

Hence, calculations for warp jumps were made with extra care. People who could calculate the warp jump points of others quickly like Little Rock were exceptional geniuses.

Time seemed to slow down. Seconds felt like minutes. Everyone

in the warship could feel the suffocating tension.

They all prayed that the enemy's mechs did not discover Coxcomb's intention. Everyone stared at the holographic screen unblinkingly. The 13 mechs were still flying outwards, taking their huge detour. For the moment, none of them seemed aware of what Coxcomb was up to.

Time passed. The warp jump point was getting closer. Everyone could feel the tension rising. Little Rock balled up his fists, his face turning red. Even Zhu Ling was breathing heavily. Lian Yue was even worse off, sweat covering all over him, but he did not care to wipe them off.

Almost ... Almost ... Almost there ...

"What?!" Everyone except Ye Chong gasped almost simultaneously, their faces betraying fear and surprise.

The scorpion-shaped mech had a dark brown tail, the tip of which was now shining bright red. The sight was familiar to Ye Chong. He immediately thought of the faint blue light visible when an electromagnetic cannon was charging for an attack.

Now, even Ye Chong felt a sense of foreboding.

A dark red beam hit Coxcomb.

Chapter 258: The Destiny

"Where are we?"

"Unknown," Mu told Ye Chong who was the first morning bird among the folks thanks to his very best physique. Mu's reply had always been that indifferent.

He took a look at the visuals. His drowsy eyes straightened themselves upon glance. Even an even-tempered person like Ye Chong became odd-tempered for a second because of the scene.

"What... are these?" whispered Ye Chong with his finger pointing at those layers of crimson fluttering in the projection, where the Coxcomb was currently sailing on. The layers were as thick as the bog, sometimes they were as thin as the fog. They could be dense, they could also be diluted as if a space rain had fallen. The nameless misty redness was giving the hologramic detection system a major interruption, where even Mu's built-in detection system had to force its proximity reduced to almost nothing. What about Photon Mode? Ye Chong peeked at the outside through the window, the mode would be a hopeless attempt.

"Matches with the databank: Negative. Component: Unknown," that statement from Mu gave Ye Chong another moment of flinched silence.

"Then how do we know if we are sailing in the right direction?" asked Ye Chong. Unlike the sea, a spaceship must locate its coordination all the time. It was not a journey that could be led by a general direction or they could sail way off the planned course easily, to nowhere... And there were tiny asteroids hovering in the space, reminding the Coxcomb to not take a reckless sail on them.

"I would say, we would have to rely on RnG," said Mu helplessly.

...

Ye Chong was speechless...

The rest of the members woke up very soon after that. The tension, panic and screams Ye Chong was expecting could hardly be seen on them. Zhu Ling just got up and went back to her training room, while Lian Yue, after a nice stretch and a few rubs on his neck, sauntered back to the laboratory after muttering a few words. As for Little Rock... well, he stayed on the ground, as he looked upon the ceiling, dazing off in accordance with his routine.

Why none of them showed concern to our situation now? Wondered Ye Chong really peculiarly.

The Coxcomb travelled in the mystifying zone for the next three days, which he never made a breakthrough within. They were still in the red sea. The zone was rather quiet and nothing had happened just yet, while the supplies of living necessity as well as the batteries were more than sufficient.

The folks had once extracted the strange stream of scarlet to perform analysis, but their research resulted in nothing significant. Their outcome this far, was merely concluding that the scarlet had indeed a negative effect on transmitting signals while altering its viscosity periodically in the space. Whether it could be harmful to human body... they do not have a living subject to test it on, and none of them ever had the courage to experiment themselves.

As the exact coordination remained unknown for the whole time, Mu could not risk to perform a space-jump, so the Coxcomb remained on its unintelligible course.

After two days of tension facing the unknown, Ye Chong too regained his calmness as he withdrew his nervousness and locked back into his heart.

Qiu Man woke up on the third day, whom of course Lian Yue went extremely welcoming upon, although Ye Chong had taught this appeal-loving man that this very lady named Qiu Man was nothing he could lay his hands upon. He better not.

The first thing Qiu Man did was to take a look around. And she immediately understood her situation upon seeing Ye Chong.

"Who are you? What do you want from me? Where am I?" Qiu Man did not lose her grace, as she asked Ye Chong flatly, which was more than alluring to Lian Yue. She's... She's gorgeous! Moaned Lian Yue in his mind, finding Qiu Man to be someone finally able to balance out the masculinity and femininity on the ship, since well... Zhu Ling, the only female among them, depicted hardly any ladylike feature. And Lian Yue felt his heart being struck by something the very first glance he had on the lady. He felt his brain had gone short-circuit.

"The location. We have no idea as well," replied Ye Chong, ignoring the first really silly question he thought. He did not intend to skip the second question though, he wanted something else first, "Your identity?" stated he.

Ye Chong's tone always felt like the wind on a winter day, which was freezing to one's core. Even Lian Yue began sinking into his shirt and scurried from the place.

Qiu Man's heart tightened but being as witty as she was, she knew acting cooperative would be a far better choice, "I am the management of Research Center 79," she said.

Ye Chong's eyes were expressing nothing but coldness, they were not blinking as the stare went on.

And Qiu Man, as feeling pressured, could not help but to spit, "My grandfather is the leader of the intelligence."

Ye Chong withdrew his stare and made a light nod. That explained a lot. No wonder they conducted such outrageous act. He was not sure what exactly the leader of the intelligence did, but obviously it was not some random folks on the street.

"Gao Shichang... Have you heard of Gao Shichang?" asked Ye Chong abruptly.

"Ah!" Qiu Man covered her mouth, as her eyes were inflated with surprise, never expecting this young man inquiring this person. The boy seemed to be just in his twenties, while it had been 20 years since the incident happened. This boy should have nothing to do with the case... or... maybe not, could he be a relative to Gao Shichang? But according to reports, Gao Shichang should have no relative...

Ye Chong's pupils shrunk, his heart raced. There's something wrong from this woman. She must know something!

But Qiu Man's following reaction was not according to his preference, as no matter what he asked, how he asked, she remained in total silence. Sigh... it looks like I'm the wrong person to do the enquiry... I should hand it to the expert. Shang still did this like his bread and butter.

I'll let the expert do the job then. Thought Ye Chong as he got up and walked away.

Lian Yue was very displeasing to Ye Chong, with his disgusting expression stuck upon Qiu Man's gestures for some hours daily. He had to make the man forget about women, there was a way of course - mech-engine research and development, Ye Chong would make great use of those rich information he stole from Donald's research unit.

It felt like an reincarnation of their past on the Coxcomb, where Zhu Ling would spend her days and nights training, Little Rock would be doing nothing as something kept running in his head, while Ye Chong, with his vain partner Lian Yue would be analyzing the information he obtained.

Lian Yue, despite his vanity, was still a genius in engine-development. It took him only three days to fully digest the concept of Donald's designs. And as Ye Chong had predicted, Donald was indeed facing a stuck-up situation in his research.

And both of them spent the whole day figuring out that missing

spot on the incomplete blueprint. Ye Chong might have been the layman in this, but he had seen way more advanced engines than Lian Yue, especially with his well educated on the fundamentals, Lian Yue was utterly surprised.

Under Lian Yue's guidance, Ye Chong's engine developing skills were rapidly improving. He had that well-founded primary expertise and vast exposure to actual engines, he just lacked a good teacher to refine what he saw and what he experienced. After a few pointers made by Lian Yue, Ye Chong's understanding exploded as he realized everything was being connected in his head and making better sense.

Lian Yue was astonished as he had been assumed a genius himself and now he saw someone who was pretty much close to what he believed a genius was. And he was excited, certainly.

"Oh my gosh! You must see this darling! Now when we move this, yes, to that circuit, it would trigger this, yes namely the..." Lian Yue was very, very excited, which worn Ye Chong out quickly.

His thinking leapt from one spot to another speedily. Ye Chong the one with lacked advanced knowledge found it difficult to follow, "I mean, sometimes I really hate the choice of components in engine among the designers, you see..." Ye Chong was forced to activate his brain cells on full force in order to understand what the heck this being was trying to convey.

It could not be helped as Lian Yue had always been the lone wolf in the field and he had finally found someone who could join him in his research, how could he not be excited over this?

"How do you think the more densely structured circuits are compared to the light structures?"

"Hey, Ye, you should watch this visual I downloaded before. It's about the history of engine components. Yeah we could have a brief seminar on it." Everyday Lian Yue would haunt Ye Chong to have a discussion on mech engines, which drove the poor

indifferent man running away. Nonetheless, it was because of this haunting person, Ye Chong had gained tremendous improvement in this field, as he began being able to follow Lian Yue's conversation after a week or so. With his immense exposure to the variety of engines in mechs he had encountered, sometimes he would make some really bold comments, which were a shocker to Lian Yue.

A month later they had finally produced a blueprint for a new engine, on the basis of Donald's design, with the concepts of the engines Ye Chong had seen on mechs of the three forces incorporated. They were not really that great compared to Donald, they were just completing the giant circle the former had drawn over the years. Everyone could see that.

The new engine was known as "the Destiny", the name was given by Lian Yue. Well, Ye Chong would not mind as usual, he had lots more things to do, as his eyes were glued on the blueprint, wondering in his toasting head on how they were supposed to transform these dots and lines into an actual object.

Assuming they were truly producing this, based on their calculations, its potential efficiency would be 3 times greater than the Overwing's maximum performance. Of course, that figure was just on paper. It would be rather far-fetched to achieve that since that would impose a ridiculous requirement on the materials.

Still, the capabilities of the Destiny were not something both Ye Chong and Lian Yue had expected, since they were just aiming to design a model which could perform with a similar efficiency as the Overwing but the result was jaw-dropping.

That was theoretically speaking though. What Ye Chong needed to do would be to actually craft it, only the actual object could do the speaking.

First-off, the materials... Like what the heck do we use to produce this? Thought Ye Chong, puzzled as he stood before that gigantic

inventory of his, filled with numerous bones of great quality, a collection of uncommon mineralites and even some transmuted energy ores. He had a cabinet of the greatest things one could imagine from the galaxy.

The next fortnight Ye Chong spent on experiments, trying to select the materials to produce the Destiny. He had tested on countless formula and only a fortunate person like him could do experiments on these ultimate rare materials as if the beans and carrots from the supermarket. But Ye Chong picked skeletons in the end.

The bones of Blue Dragon Glider, had a texture of the jades, provided great physical properties while it retained a nimble structure, were one of the best skeletons in Ye Chong's inventory. He had never seen Blue Dragon Glider in his life but Master Ge gave marvelous comments on it in the encyclopedia with high respects. And after evaluating its compatibility with the design, it might not be able to achieve the engine's maximum potential efficiency, but it would be the one with highest compatibility among the other materials.

Nevertheless, Ye Chong included a few key components in alloys since the production of alloys was much more efficient than skeletons. 80% of skeletons and 20% of alloys. To get the very best of the performance, Ye Chong - holding his heart, bidding farewell - took the bucket containing the colorful transmuted energy ores, few splashes were heard and the ores were poured into the melting pot with the alloys. He had consumed half of the energy ores he collected from the planet.

He got to do it, for he was currently in the unknown, which gave him a strong sense of danger. If there was any method for Ye Chong to further increase his offensive forces, he would do it, by hook or by crook. The golden law of survival, the stronger you get, the more likely you will survive.

And there it is! He made it, the Destiny had been born!

He installed it into Han Jia. Okay, he got into the cabin and took a breath. Tapped the button. And the engine taught him what real speed was.

It was too fast!

The Destiny might be unable to achieve that whooping 3 times greater than the Overwing but it still surpassed the Overwing's engine by 1.5 times. Moreover, Hanjia was way lighter than Overwing, so Han Jia's maximum speed could be twice as fast as Overwing's.

Wow, 2 times faster than Overwing's. What kind of speed would that be? Everyone was astounded when Ye Chong was piloting Han Jia in the training room, except Mu. Ye Chong could not imagine, how amazing he would feel if he one day was ever able to make Mu dropped his mechanical jaw as well.

Now you see me.

Now you don't.

A perfect description on Han Jia's new velocity. Zhu Ling on Overwing tried fighting against Ye Chong and only lasted for a good 30 second. Such potent mech, Ye Chong was overconfident, as he imagined himself being fearless even against the ace pilots of the 3 forces.

Oh well. It was good while it lasted, when Mu taught Ye Chong a lesson. He only lasted for 20 minutes under Mu's attack, and it was a hand to hand combat. Ye Chong knew his limits especially Mu was the best at ranged attacks with Recursion and not a hand-to-hand combat. If Mu ever had a duel with him with Recursion, Ye Chong probably could even face a hard time staying up for half a minute.

20 minute survival was still a great record for Ye Chong, since it was the longest in the record of him fighting against Mu.

Imagine if Mu Shang were completed, how powerful would they

be? Frightened Ye Chong but he grew confused as well, as once he had asked Mu whether he was the greatest and the reply was Mu could be merely somewhere between the 500th and 600th greatest mechs in the galaxy. Ye Chong did not take Mu's comment by heart, he simply found it fascinating since Mu was pretty much crippled yet he retained within the 600th.

But after their adventure, Ye Chong started to question that statement.

He had encountered the Strong's countless times coming from all kinds of field. The Nirvana pilot, the ace of the Sanctuary, Feng Su for example, and those two advanced mechs of the Freedom Alliance who drove them into this bizarre area in the first place... All of them, disregarding their experience and expertise, were technically not even competent to be Mu Shang's opponents despite Mu Shang's damaged system. If Mu Shang were currently within the 600th, that would mean there were at least 400 to 500 experts they would be encountering above.

But where are they? Those aces Ye Chong had encountered before were already considered as the greatest individuals in the 5 major galaxies.

Mu could not be lying. Ye Chong could confirm that, it was just that Ye Chong was curious of this. Well, screw that, who cares! Even if those Strong's do exist, they were none of my business!

"Greetings, Ye. I hereby present you the outcome of my progress. This lassie does know a lot. Such a memorable experience interrogating the beauty. Jajaja! Never once I would expect this Freedom Alliance having so many interesting stories to tell," stated Shang, with a mesmerized expression.

Chapter 259: Entangled, the Red Sea I

Ye Chong took a glance at Qiu Man who appeared to be rather low-spirited for some reason. It was as if Shang had drained every last ounce of her soul through that "interrogation" of his. One might question the homosapien cruelty but Ye Chong had to admit that Shang's special session was clearly effective. Lian Yue, who also had tasted Shang's course before, projected a similar sympathy towards Qiu Man through his watery eyes.

Qiu Man was very well-informed in where she belonged, which turned out to be surprising to Ye Chong, since she seemed to be just his age while the inquiry was about something that happened over 20 years ago. How the hell does she know? Ye Chong almost had his eyes wide open upon hearing the report from Shang.

Based on what had Shang acquired from Qiu Man, apparently her grandfather, Qiu Yuanlie was exactly one of the few very persons behind this. But what he was assigned to turned out to be merely the cleaning after the case. And yes, quite to everyone's shock that Qiu Man's grandfather, being the "cleaner" of the case, was that super Maverick everyone shunned themselves away from the whole time, which justified Qiu Man's persistent silence throughout the session. It also happened to be because of his performance in this case, Qiu Yuanlie was promoted as the leader of the Freedom Alliance's intelligence.

It was a logical promotion, considering how he managed to wipe away everything regarding a public figure on the virtual networking system singlehandedly 20 years ago. And this was not something that even the current Mavericks could have done with technologies today. It was the brightest entry in his life Qiu Yuanlie considered for himself. So the every bit of details related to the case were generously collected in his records, which kept Qiu Man well-informed of her grandfather's glorious act in the past. But certainly she would fear Ye Chong and the others would be

taking action against her grandfather, her words could have determined her grandfather's mortality, so she insisted to keep her mouth zipped before.

Gao Shichang was formerly the top mech designer under Prometheus Group. And Freedom Alliance - while being obviously not as established as now - had once infiltrated the group, trying to gain the fond of this amazing talent, to persuade his contribution to the alliance itself. Rather unfortunately, on one occasion, Gao Shichang was made aware of their infiltration, and as much as a strong-willed person he was, he portrayed obstinate resistant towards their offers upon exposure. Gao Shichang was then given further persuasion of all sorts, including threat, bribery, coercion, anything in the bibliography of a gang. Nevertheless, the genius refused to make a move as he ventured into something more strikingly taboo to the alliance. He was involved in a secret project, which eventually became the end of his tale.

Qiu Man claimed to have never seen the projection of Gao Shichang in person. And evidently she also had no idea if Gao Shichang was the papa Ye Chong searched for long. These records were a secret report seemingly. And inside the report, there was one entry which stated that the one who executed Gao Shichang was actually the very best friend of his and that friend also happened to be the second greatest mech designer to Gao Shichang in Prometheus Group.

No doubt, the entry with greatest amount of details was the part where Qiu Yuanlie performed his cleaning on the virtual networking system, listed from the hows to the whys. He had never seen Gao Shichang face-to-face, but naturally he must have seen the projection of this target once at least. He would probably be the only person in the entire galaxy who could tell if Gao Shichang was the papa of Ye Chong, even though that so-called "best friend" of Gao Shichang could do the same as well.

So much hassle Ye Chong had gone through yet so little

information he had revealed, while also putting him under greater risk because of what he had done. It was discouraging to Ye Chong.

Qiu Man's information on Gao Shichang seemed to have ended there as well. Well, under Shang's unique interrogating technique, quite a handful amount of information on the inside of the Freedom Alliance was obtained at least, although Ye Chong showed little interest on it. The first thing on his priority after this was to resolve the following issues.

First off... how should Ye Chong "handle" Qiu Man? He could save a significant amount of food if he could eliminate her, but it would feel too cruel to eliminate his own kind and he was not the killing type of person from the beginning anyway. He let Qiu Man off his grip in the end and decided to give her the freedom to move around in the ship, since technically there was no such deepest and darkest secret in the Coxcomb.

And the Coxcomb was still sailing in this boundless-looking sea of scarlet.

Although the mist was thick and sometimes thin, they realized something as they progressed, that the range of density of the mist was increasing noticeably. The density remained fluctuating but it was an enough worrying sight for the folks on the ship. There should be something in the front, but there was no way to tell if that thing was benign or malignant. Shang, knowing it was no longer the right stage for him, switched his place with Mu instead. Once in a blue moon, he proactively gave his microphone away and sank behind the scene.

The mist thickened, yet nothing had happened in the next few days.

Ye Chong had wasted enough time anticipating nothing these few days, so on the next tick of his biological clock, he just got back to his routine mech modification as he laid his hands upon the Guardian as he felt more potential with the new engine installed

on the Guardian instead. He was right, the Guardian after the installation of the new engine had made a major improvement in its offenses, but it was not enough and Ye Chong remained unsatisfied. He viewed the massive inventory of his, filled with a range of precious materials which could drive any professional mad on spot, that he felt so precious that it would be a waste if he used them right now. Mu had said those materials would be unable to exert the optimum capacity in here. But he had to use them right away, as aware he was, these materials would determine whether they could make it through this time. Materials could be valuable but the values would be lost the moment the owner was lost.

He went to Mu and grabbed the Do-Kun stone, which its performance on Harmony's lance was utterly memorable. A little mixture of Do-Kun stone in the formation and the lance almost skewed Instructor Hak inside the mech with its superior sharpness.

And now, he had Do-Kun stone and an inventory of uncommon mineralites. He selected a few formula from Mu's databank, which were the results of Mu's impeccable calculation and involved solely the sources Ye Chong currently owned. He tried experimenting them and after wasting a tiny piece of Do-Kun stone he finally obtained the best formula from what he owned. He might probably be the only person who actually used a ultra luxury like Do-Kun stone to perform experiments.

Without further ado, he proceeded with weapon-crafting since it would be a piece of cake having the right formula to follow.

He was making a dagger. Of course, Ye Chong still had that connection with daggers. Those were something he had the most hands-on experience. Almost every transmuted energy ore rolling in the inventory along with the uncommon ores were dumped into the pot and a pair of twin daggers were made, in a length of about 1.5 meters. The effect was imaginably potent.

The body of the dagger exerted a color of pale grey in a lack of glow. The design was seemingly simple too without much adornment, which one could say the kind to be "easily-overlooked". That would be perfect, as long as it stayed potentially overlooked, no one would be aware of what the daggers were capable of, till the daggers got into action. Probably no one other than Ye Chong would invest a full Do-Kun stone on a pair of daggers like these. The value of those mineralites the daggers consumed would be astronomical, even without the inclusion of Do-Kun stone.

Ye Chong was loving his new toy already. The daggers were silent, low-profiled yet formidable, handy. The sharpness of the daggers had also gone beyond everyone's imagination, including Mu. Ye Chong could not find anything that could last under the slashes of his new daggers. And everyone's comment was negative towards the capability of the daggers in the first place, which further convinced Ye Chong how the daggers would be a lovely surprise to the foes in future.

Even if he were to fight against a warship, providing that he was not interrupted by external circumstances, he probably could slice the armor of the ship like slicing puddings.

And the previous pair of daggers became the substitute instead.

The only regret for Ye Chong was how he never managed to utilize the Teardrop. So based on what Mu had told, this thing was a super duper condensed battery. He would love to use it but to extract it Ye Chong would have to use a particular kind of matter, namely the Nonlinear Cobalite, which was non-existent in his inventory or he would have used the Teardrop as his pseudo-perpetual motion provider, since Mu claimed that the energy was so vast that it could last the warship several years, while being able to sustain a mech for decades or even centuries.

That definitely could translate as the dramatic increase of warship and mech's travel. But well, the Teardrop was something

so rare that what it could do mostly remained on paper.

Ye Chong had a handful of Teardrops, he could say he had the necessary technique as well but he did not have the cobalite, which directly suggested him to put the Teardrops down and forget about them. The headache-giving lecture from Mu was not for nothing after all. He had practically mastered the technique of Teardrop's energy extraction. And he believed he would be able to extract and install the Teardrops inside the Coxcomb at the first moment he got that very ingredient.

But then... Sigh...

Oh well. Thought Ye Chong as he sank the 3 Teardrops into his bag, while passing the remaining 4 to Mu.

He had consumed countless amount of materials in his bank these few days. He grew so familiar with those uncommon ores that he could tell the names and the properties of the ores at first glance, after almost tearing the metallurgy encyclopedia in Mu's databank.

Seeing how his rich collection had half of it vaporized was giving him slight heartache, although he knew that those were gone for his own consumption.

"Ye, something happened," said Mu through the announcement. Ye Chong sprung from his seat. There had not been anything happening these few days, which was weird. It was quiet, but too quiet. It was a torture of bearing the fear towards the unknown for the past month they travelled, that even Ye Chong felt the stress haunting him.

On the hologramic projection, the red mist wavered like red fluid, which had visibly hindered the Coxcomb's movement.

That was not the crew's attention. Those red strands swimming in the red sea were something bizarre to behold. Nobody knew when these strands started appearing and nobody could tell what

they exactly looked like, since sometimes the strands were thin like the hair while being able to look broad like the asteroid belt, taking the length of a solar system occasionally. The number of the strands were frightening, the crew felt like they were sailing on the weeds of the red sea.

The body of the Coxcomb had been entangled by numerous strands, which gave him an appearance of a coated pirate ship. The strands were forceful, something the crew was uncalled for. Under the pull of the strands, the Coxcomb was directed away from his former course.

The strands gathered around the Coxcomb, as they danced along the vibrance of the red sea. Few strands were fine but... gazillion strands turning at the propellants of their ship were horrifying.

!

Ye Chong, with his sharp eyes, noticed the strands broadening gradually.

The Coxcomb felt like a potassium dipped into a red pool. The Coxcomb seemed to be engulfed by the red sea with the strange screeches of pulling, to their horror, the crew discovered the number of red strands had been growing worryingly.

"Oh no..." Whispered Ye Chong, looking at the camera flooded by those peculiar strands. They would soon be entangled into a pupa by the red sea alive if nothing was done. They would be buried alive... These red strands were high in tenacity, with the momentum the Coxcomb was producing, it would be impossible to break through them.

Chapter 260: Entangled, the Red Sea II

It looks like we have to go for the hard way. Thought Ye Chong, as succumbed to his last resort, gesturing Shang to give a few taps on the panel. Tick! And every part of the Coxcomb's weaponry came forth. Countless laser firing devices rotated into position, while the electromagnetic cannons began charging, along with the Beauty's Secretion which Shang believed to be a very drastic measure in his hand.

They were unsure if these weapons were able to change anything, but doing nothing would surely be an imprisonment to death for everyone!

No time to give a damn anymore!

ZZzzzzzt!

All laser firing units blasted with the bombardment of electromagnetism. The hologram sparked in plain white, even Ye Chong and his folks were stunned by the scene. They saw neither lasers nor electromagnetic waves, they only perceived the brightest blast. Will the unstable crossing of two energy tear the corner of galaxy?! Will an explosion occur?!

...

The expected explosion did not occur, which was a major relief to everyone. They found their attempt to be rather risky, considering how these strange misty structures in crimson was flammable by nature. They might burn a way out, but they could cause an explosion too. Assuming an explosion truly occurred, never the Coxcomb would be able to survive such a supernova-like explosion.

Their eyes set upon the regained vision on the projection, and they staggered.

The strands... they did not decrease, not at all. Did they just dramatically multiply themselves in this brief time window? Holy

Fal... No way! How could that be? Firepower this dense could have smashed the toughest warship or mech, these strands should have been powdered into specks!

But judging by what was being projected on the visual, the odd strands remained unharmed. Wait, did that mean... these strands are actually immune to energy-based beams? Speculated Ye Chong in his mind immediately.

Zzt! Zzt! Zzt!

The laser firing devices did not rest as they carried on raiding the space with a shower of beams. Now without the interference of electromagnetic waves, Ye Chong could see it, the scenery that stirred his disbeliefs - the laser beams rained upon the strands, like actual rain landing on a red pool, where ripples were seen, nothing else happened.

Ye Chong flinched, as his speculation had been verified.

His eyes glared upon the visual, with one last hope mustered in him, the Beauty's Secretion, a creation of Ye Chong validated by the few wars he had gotten into. The corrosiveness was great that the secretion could fully corrode the outer layer of a mech very quick after contact, leading to the death of the pilot inside due to the leak of oxygen.

Come on!

His eyes enlarged, staring at that one Beauty's Secretion hovering towards the targets. It moved rather sluggishly because of the delay effect caused by the strands. And contact had been made! The accuracy of the Beauty's Secretion could hardly be guaranteed in an environment like this, but well, there were tons of targets where it could land, so there was not much of need to aim actually.

Beauty's Secretion splattered, Shang's Liquid splashed upon the strand. The corrosiveness was not disappointing, as it began causing few columns of emerald smokes upon the strand with the

size of an arm. The strand broke into half!

Ye Chong wanted to raise the corners of his lips, nevertheless, the corners collapsed to a whole new threshold.

The strands multiplied themselves again within that split second. Beauty's Secretion could be that potent to destroy them, but it would be too far-fetched to use it to clear a way out for the Coxcomb. The corrosion was unable to catch up with the multiplication of the red strands. It would feel like a drop of herbicide to the lawn even if he launched all secretions he possessed.

What are these strands? Everyone stumbled upon the visual. Zhu Ling was calm, kind of. Qiu Man was already much paler than she usually was, with the hands pressed on her chests.

"Mu, any idea what this is?" asked Ye Chong quickly.

"Substance unknown. Composition unknown," stated Mu, with the calmness of eternity even before the death.

Ye Chong instantly deployed Han Jia and took a quick leap into the cabin. "Mu, get the gate open, I'll go get some sample."

"Take care."

Before that syllable of concern fell, Han Jia had already zoomed its way to the gate at highest momentum, with a plan in mind.

Sample the red strands, find out the exact composition of these strands, investigate its chemical and physical characteristics and take the necessary action against them, or else we would die here! The Coxcomb had been completely tied to the red sea. Fully immobilized, no chance for him to even consider a back-out.

The rapports between Ye Chong and Mu were great, as the timing of the gate opening was just as right.

Ye Chong flew out of the Coxcomb. That was when he finally had a better look on the red sea, realizing to his horror, of how dense

these structures were, as the Coxcomb had been utterly enveloped into something like a red cocoon, a quivering ball of yarn.

Something was strange. Ye Chong discovered as he flew on. Apparently Han Jia was unaffected by the delay effects of the red strands, despite flying boldly through the densest layer. Judging by what happened to the Coxcomb, the red mist should have a noticeably negative effect on warships, or generally any flying object. But... he felt nothing on Han Jia?

He gave a tap and Han Jia accelerated towards the nearest strand at the side, which happened to have a diameter over a meter while wriggling rhythmically. It felt very tender, with partial transparency, a bit rubbery? Han Jia grabbed the strand and withdrew a dagger with the other hand.

SSssslurp.

?

The red strand was extremely slippery, with a kind of pulling force within. Ye Chong realized as he saw the strand escape the grip of Han Jia. He hurriedly seized the red strand back into his hand.

A slash with his dagger and a lining of the mist was cleared, which recovered shortly after.

And that was the very first debut of this new dagger, cutting red weed. At least it was not disappointing as the red strand was sliced easily. One more slash and Ye Chong had sampled a strand about 2 meters long. This should be enough.

He was going to turn back but...something big was coming to his way.

A giant red pillar of a diameter over 70 kilometers swept over the rhythm of the red mist, as if a gentle breeze of a bloody spring, as towards it swung the Coxcomb which looked like a red yarn ball on Christmas, like the granny's cane on a cleaning day.

Thup.

Ye Chong was in the middle of its way. His vision blacked out as he felt a heavy force dragging his entire body tumbling, the sudden wham caused him to lose control over Han Jia completely. The mech began sinking in the waves of strands, a muffling cry whispered throughout the darkened cabin, "Y...Ye..."

After Ye Chong got back with the time, he realized he had lost the Coxcomb as his sight was flooded with these bizarrely-aggressive strands. He could feel the waves, bouncing him mischiefs as he tried pulling himself away, it almost felt like his limbs were bound by a bunch of wriggling springs.

Oh no. Ye Chong panicked.

Transmission would be nearly impossible to reach Mu as long as he was inside the depth of the sea. The red mist was sticky like a viscous layer of glue, visibility zero, and now with the kind assistance of these red strands, Ye Chong could barely tell his location.

Ye Chong calmed down shortly after, knowing that panic and fear would do him no good at the moment. Rather it would only worsen his situation, now he would need to find out where Mu and the Coxcomb were, since obviously the survivability of being in such environment alone would be subzero.

The red mist brewed and Ye Chong nearly was unable to find where his dagger located his body.

He rebooted Han Jia and piloted it towards the direction of the Coxcomb... by estimation and impression of course... although he remained confused, wondering what had hit him just now. The force could be said as colossal, which was not something a human like him could fight against. If there was not these strands to buffer the inertia, he could not imagine, without the friction of any form like the air, how far he would have been sent.

It's here. It's here?

No it should be... there?

No... I could not find it. I still could not find it. Han Jia was squirming through the waving gaps. Ye Chong had searched most parts of the area but he could not find the Coxcomb at all. The communicator had been dead silence ever since.

Goddammit! This bloody red mist! If it was not the mist, he could have contacted Mu despite the pulling of these strands. Even if he could not, Mu could at least get his coordination!

He carried on searching on a larger scope. Nope, no sight of the Coxcomb... This was getting nowhere. Ye Chong was forced to surrender. Practically, he should have given up way back, as he was in a foreign zone with nearly zero visibility and a waving structure. If he were to attempt marking the strands to identify his direction, it would be like marking the waves of seaweeds as one swam in the sea. It would be pointless.

Mu... Shang...

Ye Chong gave a wry smile. Mu Shang had always been by his side, through thick and thin, sharing joy and grief, then a sudden blow and he was stuck in this strange zone without them. Ye Chong was lost, feeling his heart empty.

Well... I have to at least survive. Bucked up Ye Chong.

Fortunately I retained that habit of bringing supplementary batteries and nutrition capsules with me all the time, or I would be living with non-existent possibility to leave this red sea. I would not want to be starved to dead, at a horrible place like this.

He then picked a direction to travel randomly. He flew straight, he would not bother anymore as all direction would hold the same odds for him.

Han Jia was not hindered by the red sea unexpectedly, there was no delay at all, as if its usual flights in the vacuum. Ye Chong

thought it was him overthinking at first, but the reality was there, which was confusing as Mu had once reported that the thickening of red sea had obstructed the movement of the Coxcomb. The overlooked statement kept ringing in his head.

That was not all.

The strands were acting strangely towards Han Jia. They were rather... slippery, so slippery that they felt like completely lubricated as they slipped over Han Jia's body as it moved. No strand had caught Han Jia, not even one.

But Ye Chong could still remember that horrendous scene of seeing how the Coxcomb was melting in the red sea by the grasp of strands like a piece of potassium into the water, as the red strands grew over the body of the Coxcomb at a horrifying speed. The Coxcomb started turning into a yarn ball since then.

Weird! Why would the strands not catch him?

Was it because of the material of Han Jia? Speculated Ye Chong promptly but he was not in any mood for researches, he just wanted to leave this mental-scarring place as soon as possible.

When one were to travel in the boundless space, the helpless loneliness could overwhelm one to one's homicidal thoughts, as one could not help but to wonder on what would be lying ahead, which in the decade one would meet an actual person, to where exactly one would be heading, for how long one would have to travel. It would feel like days... weeks, months... or...

...

Nevertheless, Ye Chong flew on, with Han Jia remained at maximum velocity, as the universal law rang in his head - if you were to fight for the opportunity, you might not get the opportunity; but if you were never to fight for opportunity, you would never get the opportunity.

Although he must admit... traveling in a lubricated area of

strands felt rather intriguing, assuming he was not in such endangered situation.

His eyes set upon the waves of red strands. They seemed to be growing again, even though they were not growing as horribly quick as the time he saw back in the Coxcomb, he could discern the growth, they were growing broader. Ye Chong hypothesized that both the red strands and the red sea should share the same matter, it could be a kind of solidification, de-solidification, condensation, vaporizing process like water but ... Ye Chong was not really sure on what condition the process would be triggered.

Most of the strands in the red sea were floating with an outrageous diameter, where some hit about a few tens kilometers. That was annoying because Ye Chong could hardly see a thing in the front, at caution he only got to reduce his velocity gradually.

He felt inspired out of sudden as he discovered a way to preserve energy. Han Jia would act like an agile mutated ape, traveling in the woods of reddish vines around, but with way more alien elasticity. Han Jia grabbed the vines and swung to the following, this was a faster approach, more energy-saving too!

He had to save on energy since he could not reckon how far ahead he got to travel before he hit an opening, even though the travel with lower energy cost was sustained on the basis of a larger demand on his piloting.

At least he was a master pilot of some sort. The first two days were a little chaotic though as rushing through the vines would give him constant tension, which would wear him out quickly. Ye Chong was lucky to have a stronger physique than most men so the chaos only lasted for two days before Ye Chong finally adapted himself to the high tension execution.

Of course one could say that a man would have his most potential excavated at the drastic edge of death.

The red sea had lots of strands, much more than the area

surrounding the Coxcomb, but the density was much smaller. No doubt, Ye Chong could confirm that something about the Coxcomb must have triggered the red mist there, which led to the aggressiveness. Well, he had yet reached the conclusion on what triggered it.

Twelve hundred and two hundred and seventy three. Counted Ye Chong.

His hands swung along with Han Jia upon the control panel, smoothly like a real mutated ape seesawing throughout the woods.

The travel seemed to be endless, and Ye Chong felt he was collapsing at any second but somehow his expression was depicting a hint of excitement.

And Ye Chong started to see the red mist fading out, the strands were retreating on his way.

Right! That means... I am right! I am going out!

Chapter 261: Living from the Unknown

Ye Chong's sense of direction was right, the mist was in fact fading away as he hovered on. He started noticing the few mysterious regularities within the mist. There seemed to be a cycle... which affected the thickness of the mist. So whenever the red mist began diminishing, the red strands would turn finer and some of them would disintegrate as well. In the midst of the mist in pale scarlet, only the strands thinner than fingers remained. The strands were outstanding as they stood in a sharper crimson than their broader counterpart, like burning flame. The strength of these strands was probably far greater than the normal strands behind. Ye Chong in his Han Jia gave a careful slash to the root and grabbed stalk of them. These were far more reliable than the usual ropes, would be perfect as a lifeline.

On little bit of curiosity, Ye Chong realized he could not even tear the fine strands apart. These were some real physic-defying threads. Well, if they were really "threads" to begin with. Ye Chong was rather intrigued by the composition of these red strands, being eager for exploration in the chemical composition of matters was a typical character setting for an alchemist like himself.

Without the hinderance of the strands, Han Jia started regaining its mobility. Ye Chong was very much avid for a fancy race on Mach 20, but he had to conserve his batteries, as he maintained Han Jia at around Mach 18. Still, Mach 18 was already a speed way different than what Han Jia used to travel at.

The mist was disappearing, as Ye Chong's visibility restored. Han Jia's built-in hologramic detection system had won back Ye Chong's trust since the interference was getting overcome.

It was weird though, that Ye Chong did not see any planet despite his long travels. He technically had barely seen anything else than the red strands and red sea themselves.

In a void so vast and boundless, how could there be only a misty field of red strands? There was nothing else? Really? What is the mist for? Where do they come from? How large the field was exactly? Nobody knew, nobody could tell.

Ye Chong did have that innate curiosity to venture into the unknown, but that did not mean he would compromise his safety and jump into a potential black hole.

He travelled for the following week with the digital clock ticking inside the cabin. It was a relief when he was finally able to escape from the creepy red sea. No message was received. No notification was on his screen. There was no incoming signal as well. There were too many unknowns inside the galaxies, so many taboos they should not fondle with. It would be a miracle if he was able to encounter the Coxcomb by coincidence in a space like this. Ye Chong would not even dare to tell if Mu had successfully escaped the grasp of red mist.

He took a look around, the familiar black airless void in his surrounding. He sighed, in relief.

Till he lifted his head to the front, he stumbled upon the scenery before him.

Asteroid belt... Ye Chong realized the vast deadly red sea was actually wrapped by a far more enormous asteroid belt.

An asteroid belt was nothing new in the record of exploration by humanity. The 5 major galaxies alone would have a handful of places with asteroid belts, which some people would call it "The Zone of Dead Calamity". Humanity today showed little understanding towards the asteroid belts for it contained, as the name stated, the deadliest calamity one could imagine, not only because of the demand of exceptional piloting, but also what lived inside the core of the belt. There was hardly anybody who had hit the depth of the belt.

No one could explain how these belts were formed, while some

experts claimed them having the same formation of the ring of a planet from one solar system with the name Saturn, which was not even a good analogy to begin with. The structure of the asteroid belts was not something that was born by an explosion of planet or a byproduct of black hole throwing up, it was an unknown, with unidentified danger lurking within. People could not give a sound statement for the asteroid containment, but they all could illustrate a vivid imagery of the horrendous explosion of asteroid whirlpool as it was something that could devastate probably anything nearby, which stirred up the greatest fear in mankind.

And Ye Chong had experienced it once himself, if it was not Mu who woke up in time, he would have been permanently part of the belt now.

But unlike those he had seen before, the asteroid belt before him was the broadest by far, as the whole red sea was fully surrounded by it.

He took a look afar... there was nothing else. He had to either venture into the belt or get back into the red sea. Wait what? No, don't be silly! Going back to that hellish place? I'd rather walk into that asteroid belt now!

Giving a few commands to Han Jia, Ye Chong advanced cautiously into the asteroid belt.

There were asteroids of all sort of sizes and shapes. There were a few with diameter about a few tens kilometers... some were about the size of his fist. Ye Chong had his attention fully to his surrounding, as he monitored those hovering asteroids around him. Those were the silent most killers one could face in the space. He had to watch and took necessary actions whenever the asteroids moved, even the slightest bit, as the memory came haunting him, reminding him of his horrible experience with the last asteroid whirlpool.

Like hell knows if there would anything funnier here!! I could

not take more jokes to my life!

There were asteroids, lots of asteroids, but it was mentally-numbing as well. It was boring yet it was something to train Ye Chong's will. After a few days of traveling in the belt, Ye Chong could already dodge the asteroids on a whim. Han Jia retreated to its below average velocity ever since they stepped into the belt, just to avoid these disorderly madness around.

Fortunately enough, despite the amount of asteroids around him, the detection system was unaffected, as it could still give Ye Chong direction. At least Ye Chong could maintain his direction and not make the wrong turn without noticing.

Ye Chong could feel his brain jamming. Well, anyone would have gone mad traveling in high alert for a few days straight without sleep.

...

... ..

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep!

The alarm wailed.

!

An alarm? Flinched Ye Chong, shaking his head to collect his thoughts, shifting his attention back onto that outdated hologramic detection system. The hologramic system would be far more useful than Ye Chong's naked eyes within the asteroids.

There was... sign... of life?

Ye Chong frowned. No way. Where do I find a lifeform in an environment like this? But... judging by the projection... there seemed to be quite a number of signs...

Did I take a detour back to the Black Coves? Speculated Ye Chong. It made sense since the Black Coves was a base sealed within an asteroid belt like this. The location was flawless, a solid

defense with countless deceiving openings for enemies to fall prey upon. It was certainly something the 3 other forces coveted and drooled at, considering how discovery of such place would require a fateful encounter rather than blind effort. Black Coves did not rely on sheer luck anyway, as they invested a tremendous amount of workforces and financial resources on building the base itself, which simply were not something the other 3 forces could have imagined.

So are these Black Covers?

Oh wait, yeah. What I'm thinking?

Ye Chong could not help but to start giggling, finding he himself being too sensitive. Of course those could never be the Black Covers, the outdated detection system of Han Jia could never detect the advanced models from the Black Coves, hah! Practically most of the detection systems were deemed useless against the models of the 3 forces anyway.

Also, judging by the figurative data generated by the system, these should be organisms, living things. But how would living things survive in harsh conditions like the asteroid belt?

Ye Chong was feeling peculiar about this, yes, he did recognize a few living things that could survive in vacuum with the drastically mutated components of their bodies compared to those habituated on the planets. However, that did not mean Ye Chong would buy the fact that, these particular vacuum-living lifeforms would just so happen to be in the asteroid belt where he was traveling, as the place blatantly shouted "unsuitable for living, stay here if you want to die" to him. And he spotted a few asteroid whirlpools quite frequently along the way. If it was not for his quick-reaction, he would have been inside one of the space blenders.

These circumstances had just proven the fact that this asteroid belt was not as benevolent, benign as it appeared to be. It was a tumor, a malignant instability that could blow up any second. It

would be a myth to have living things habituated here.

He looked at the projection again, these lifeforms did not seem to be moving the slightest bit. Ye Chong felt he was unnoticed at the moment, so he grabbed his alertness and slowed down completely. He would not want to butt his head into some territory enforced by some unidentified lifeforms and get attacked by unknown methods.

Everything in the surrounding was unknown to him. So he had to be extremely careful, as every move he made would be taken into account of his survival.

... hmm ...

?!

What? There's such zone inside the deadliest asteroid belt?

Ye Chong was stupefied.

He saw a sprout of pale lilac, with buds glowing in ghostly azure. The sprout was short, with tiny leaves and well spread over the layer of the area. Almost every rock in the proximity was covered by those sprouts. The stem was slender, bearing a fruit in haunting blue, looked like illuminating the darkness of the specks hovering nearby.

The place was filled with floating purplish rocks at a sight afar, where the blues would twinkle like the stars in the dark.

Ye Chong identified a few unknown organisms playing around the rocks. They were not tall, with a height barely 3 meters, with a pair of hind legs on the ground. Those were some real bulky legs which one would like to look out for. The top limbs were so short that it hardly reached out from their chests, armed with sharp claws that gave off hideous glows. Compared to their overwhelming hind legs, their body was rather feeble, their necks would gracefully wave at all directions along with the dark spikes over their purplish backs.

Most of their kind was busy munching the glowing bulbs on top of the sprouts. There were a few lazier ones taking a silent slumber on the cleared rocks at the side.

Ye Chong was dropping his jaws, as he never expected to see such living thing in harsh environment like this, and to top all that, those living things seemed to have taken a few turns of evolution ahead.

Ye Chong then piloted Han Jia to hide being one of the larger asteroids, since he was not sure if these organisms were naturally benevolent. He imagined that he could be skewed if he were to jump into action and alert the group's dining. Nonetheless, the scenery was still a major shocker to his perception of the world, he would need a good amount of time to digest all these.

He had the necessary patience and nutrition capsules to last him throughout the observation, although it would be marvelous if the fleshs of these animals turned out to be edible. Hunting was one of the skills he probably was born with. Back on Trash Planet, other than the Iron Lizard which stood at the topmost of the food web, there was not any animal he could not hunt.

Moreover, as far as he had observed, these lifeforms seemed to be herbivores, which were known to be gentle by nature. Well, Ye Chong did not want to gamble just yet. The environment just turned more bizarre to his understanding. It would not be surprising if there was any funny addition to the lifeforms' characteristic.

He analyzed the visual of the sprouts in high definition. He could confirm that he had never seen the planet before and it was not registered on Lunatic Guan's encyclopedia.

He carried on observing in the dark. Of course he was enthralled by his latest discovery, since he would have greater likelihood to survive with these animals around.

?!

And as expected, there was something new to his Aliendex's entry.

Chapter 262: Strangeness Everywhere

He was now about a kilometer away from those animals, but he soon noticed an opening about 300 meters wide between him and the animals. This empty space had no rocks, nothing.

In outer space, emptiness was expected. However, here in the asteroid region, it was very odd. This empty space was like a boundary that divided the asteroids.

Why would such two very different regions exist in such close proximity? On his side were rocks in abundance, devoid of any signs of life. However, 300 meters further out, it was a haven for life. There were plants and even highly evolved animals.

Ye Chong might not be an expert in evolution, but he could at least understand the basics. In a harsh environment like the asteroid belt, it was plausible to find microorganisms, lichen or even small insects living there. However, large animals like the ones he saw now was pushing the limits of nature's laws.

There was only one possible solution to this dilemma. This 300-meter space of emptiness had divided these two entirely different worlds.

What was the mystery behind this empty space?

As Ye Chong studied the herbivores' movements closely, he suddenly felt like he had a grasp of an idea. But what was it? Ye Chong could not exactly say what he felt. That vague sensation was gone in an instant.

Ye Chong did not panic. He continued studying the herbivores' movements, knowing that he must have noticed something significant to have had that feeling.

He calmed himself down and observed quietly for 10 minutes. After a full 10 minutes, Ye Chong finally understood what he was seeing.

Ye Chong's fingers danced on the controls. Han Jia picked up one of the little rocks floating around nearby and threw it gently towards the other side. Since he was hidden behind a rock, Han Jia threw at an angle upward.

The little rock flew at a constant speed, but when it reached that empty space, its trajectory suddenly shifted. It no longer flew upwards, but began to fall downwards, completing a parabolic trajectory.

"As expected," Ye Chong grew confident of his own suspicions.

Gravity - that was Ye Chong noticed. Beginning from the empty space, there was gravity! No wonder the herbivores' movements bothered him. It was gravity.

Where he was, Ye Chong did not feel even the slightest of any gravitational pull.

This was astonishing. Everything was too astonishing. Ye Chong had never seen anything like it.

However, the universe was large. Anything was possible! He quickly accepted this reality. Mankind's understanding of the universe was so dismal.

It was not for him to figure out the reason for this miracle. Survival should be his priority. No matter the time, survival was the first thing that came to his mind. Besides, given the circumstances, he had no time to think on these matters.

Since there was gravity, why did these rocks not fall into it? Where did this gravity come from?

There were too many questions! However, what did they had to do with him? What he wanted, was to survive. Now, even the search for Mu and Shang was second in his list of priorities. If he could not survive, how could he find Mu and Shang?

As for whether Mu and Shang were still living, Ye Chong dared not even consider the possibilities.

In any case, he must survive! Ye Chong steadied himself, and immediately felt more encouraged.

After some pondering, Ye Chong began to move. While it was risky, he really did not have many options.

Ye Chong took a deep breath, and moved. Han Jia abruptly sprang out from behind the rock, and went full speed straight ahead. This time, Ye Chong did not care to reserve energy, and put the engines on full power.

With Han Jia's speed at full engine capacity, a single kilometer's distance could be covered in the blink of an eye.

Abruptly, Ye Chong felt his whole body sinking downwards, like everything had suddenly turned heavier.

Han Jia also was obviously falling, but Ye Chong was prepared for this. The auxiliary engines tilted, and Han Jia was back on its intended trajectory.

Just as Ye Chong reached the empty space, those herbivores immediately lifted their heads in alarm. Han Jia's appearance had obviously surprised them. The animals panicked and quickly ran away.

Ye Chong finally saw clearly how the animals moved. Their strong hind legs allowed them to jump. They hopped from rock to rock, quick as the wind. In just a few moments, the herd of herbivores disappeared from his sight. They moved almost as fast as mechs.

Ye Chong had no time to appreciate the awe-inspiring strength of those animals, since something was going very wrong now.

The gravity was stronger than on any inhabited planet! The gravitational pull was stronger than Ye Chong expected. As he entered the empty space, Ye Chong felt his body turned even heavier.

It was like being pressed firmly into his seat. His deft hands now

felt so sluggish. The abrupt gradient of potential energy made Ye Chong dizzy. Fortunately, his lengthy training kicked in, and he flew the mech without hindrance. Despite the situation, Ye Chong did not lose control of his mech.

Han Jia landed neatly on a floating rock suspended in midair. The mech's massive weight did not even stir the rock as Han Jia stood on it.

Ye Chong quickly recovered from his dizziness. His body felt like lead, so heavy that even moving his finger was a chore. Ye Chong quickly made an estimate of the gravitational field strength, and found that it was probably about five times that of the trash planet.

Even with Ye Chong's physical strength, the strong gravitational field was enough to make movement difficult. Thinking back on how those herbivores leaped, Ye Chong felt embarrassed of himself. If it was him running, he would never be able to match their speed. Those animals were strong.

Ye Chong felt grateful. If he had been careless, those animals would be a big mess to deal with.

Ye Chong did not continue advancing, but stayed where he was and examined his surroundings. With five times the average gravitational force, Han Jia was now less powerful in combat. Han Jia's design was not meant for battle in strong gravity environments like this. With five times the gravitational force, energy consumption would increase steeply. Han Jia would also be unable to reach its maximum speed. Besides, in this environment, Ye Chong felt like he was carrying four times his own body weight, and his hands felt five times heavier than normal. With this, Ye Chong's hands would slow down, and his combat endurance would also decrease.

If he did a high speed Thomas's Spin here, Ye Chong knew that he would suffer grave internal injuries from it. With five times the

gravitational force, even sitting was hard.

There was not going around the problem. Ye Chong could only exercise caution and continue on carefully. If anything was amiss, he would run away.

The test results was encouraging for Ye Chong. There was air here, suitable for human respiration. Besides, the air quality was excellent, achieving the highest quality level possible. Even so, Ye Chong was not particularly demanding about air quality. To him, it was enough as long as the air was breathable. On the trash planet, pollution was at a critical level. Staying outdoors for long hours would be damaging to the respiratory tract and lungs.

However, Ye Chong also understood that good air quality also implied that the area was suitable for life. In fact, if it was suitable for humans, it was also suitable for most living organisms.

The air quality results was a relief for Ye Chong. The mech's air recycling system could not run forever, since it consumed energy as well. Since there was breathable air here, it was at least suitable for habitation.

With air, wildlife and the mech's water synthesizer, he already had all the basic necessities to survive.

Even though there was air outside, Ye Chong did not leave his mech. The environment was still largely unfamiliar to him, and it was safer to stay in the mech.

Numerous floating rocks seemed to suspend in the air, as though they were supported by something invisible in this strong-gravity environment. Ye Chong could not understand how this was possible. Moreover, when Han Jia stood on these rocks, they did not move at all.

What was this all about? Ye Chong could not for the life of him understand how these things came to be.

"There's so much in this world that's a mystery," he thought to

himself, and quickly moved on.

Ye Chong flew Han Jia carefully, avoiding the rocks in the air as he advanced slowly.

The further he flew, the more he discovered. There were more and more rocks suspended in the air, and there seemed to be no end in sight. Besides the purple fauna that he found earlier on those rocks, there were also a brown, lichen-like vegetation.

In this dark space, many faint blue sparkling dots surrounded the rocks. They seemed to be scattered randomly around the rocks, and brought life to the darkness.

The rocks were all scattered about irregularly. Ye Chong quickly found that flying was not a wise choice. With gravity, evasion during flight was a lot harder.

Fortunately, Ye Chong was adaptable. He quickly found a wonderful alternative - leaping, just like those herbivores. Han Jie leaped from one rock to another. Since the rocks were not too far apart, it was a suitable way of moving forward. The only problem was that Han Jia was a lot larger than those herbivores. This was a hindrance when moving between the rocks.

Besides, Ye Chong found that it was impossible to move the floating rocks vertically, parallel to the gravitational pull. However, it could be moved horizontally, and that was a curiosity to Ye Chong.

Ever since he entered the rest mist, he had encountered so many strange things. Until now, he could not understand any of them. As he continued to meet new and unexplainable phenomena, he learned to accept them quickly. After all, everything was strange around here, so different from what he knew of the world.

While he did not investigate the logic behind the things appearing around him, Ye Chong still studied everything carefully. Learning about his surroundings in unfamiliar territory would

greatly increase his chances of survival.

As Ye Chong moved further in, the rocks grew closer together. This made Han Jia's advance even harder. In the end, Ye Chong could only fly upwards.

He flew on for three days. While Han Jia was slowed down in order to avoid the rocks, he still covered a fair distance in these three days. However, Ye Chong noticed grimly that the energy consumed in these three days was equivalent to the energy ordinarily used up in two weeks. If this continued, the energy would quickly run out, and Ye Chong's most effective means of self defense would be gone.

In these three days of flight, Ye Chong encountered a few herds of those herbivores.

The only encouraging thing was that Ye Chong had finally reached the uppermost layer of the asteroid region. This was apparent from the wider expanse of empty space he reached now.

This empty space stretched on for more than 3,000 kilometers.

3,000 kilometers was the limit of Han Jia's scanning system. "I didn't think an asteroid belt will have such a mysterious place," Ye Chong could not help but exclaimed. One can imagine the massive expanse of the asteroid belt.

Ye Chong paused as he studied Han Jia's holographic scans. In the next moment, Han Jia quickly took off.

Since he was at the edge of the asteroid belt, there were no rocks to stop Han Jia, and the mech advanced swiftly.

The rocks were denser further ahead. The rocks below Han Jia grew closer and closer together. Gradually, the rocks below Han Jia formed a solid piece, like a gravelled road. Further still, the rocks were now just flat earth.

According to Han Jia's holographic scans, what laid ahead was a huge continent.

Chapter 263: Attacked

Ye Chong never imagined that he would see a continent here.

How was this possible? Ye Chong had never seen any astronomical body like this. He had travelled far and wide, and the Five Galaxies definitely did not have something like this. Almost all the astronomical bodies in the universe were spherical. This was the first time Ye Chong saw a non-spherical astronomical body.

With Ye Chong's minimal knowledge in astronomy and astrophysics, he could not fully appreciate the magnitude of the problem that this phenomenon commanded. In fact, he was only slightly surprised by his findings. If he were to publish holographic images of this place in the virtual world, it would be an earth-shattering shock to the world. The astronomy community would undergo a huge revolution. However, even if he realized what this place would mean to the world, Ye Chong would probably feel indifferent about it.

This unique astronomical body was like a huge island among the many smaller rocks scattered about the asteroid belt.

As he stepped onto the continent, Ye Chong immediately raised his guard more. There were too many strange things going on here. To survive, he must quickly adapt to his surroundings.

Returning to the Five Galaxies now seemed like an impossible task. Ye Chong was alone, and had almost used up his energy cells. He did not know where he was, not even a set of coordinates for his location that would allow for a warp jump. In any case, Han Jia was not equipped with warp jump technology.

For now, he should focus on surviving. Inside him was a strong will to live. Growing up in a harsh environment like the trash planet made Ye Chong fearless against dangerous environments. Caution would help you live longer, while fear will be the death of

you. This was something that Ye Chong realized since he was nine.

It was as though he had returned to his lonely days of struggling on the trash planet. He had only Han Jia for company. Even Mu and Shang were lost to him.

However, what could he do? Ye Chong made a rare expression of elation. Han Jia was far better than Winnie. Besides, he was a lot stronger than before. The only thing that saddened him was that he was separated from Mu and Shang.

Ye Chong quickly gathered himself. Mu's calmness was a strong influence to Ye Chong, and Ye Chong rarely found himself losing his cool.

He looked forward, and saw no end in sight. This was a huge plain. The sparkling faint blue dots covered the vast plain like a thin carpet. The view was splendid, enough to overwhelm any visiting artist.

It was a pity that the only one visiting now was Ye Chong, who had zero interest and insight into the arts.

Ye Chong was as cold as a machine, and mostly ignored the scenery. His eyes were staring straight at Han Jia's holographic screen. Every holographic system would have certain civilian functions. While military holographic scanning systems had more functionalities, it was the civilian type that was more valuable now.

Now was not the time to use the powerful military holographic scanning system, but the all-purpose engineering holographic scanning system.

Ye Chong recalled then that he had an engineering mech. This was the one he bought at Nine Gates of Daylight. It was bought with the insect mech that he used to mine transmuted energy ore on the primary planet.

Engineering mechs were an important type of civilian mech. It

could provide a certain level of security for engineers working outdoors, and had specialized engineering scanning systems that were not found in average mechs.

Ye Chong withdrew his engineering mech, but did not push forward. Instead, he made a detailed scan of the continent.

Scanning results indicated that there was a large amount of ore where Ye Chong was now. Unidentified ores made up 40 percent of them. The continent was flat, and its size was beyond the measurement limits of this engineering mech. 98 percent of the plain was covered with vegetation. This was considerably high, even when compared against primary planets that were untouched by humans. Other than the plants with light purple leaves and glowing blue orbs, and that dark brown lichen that Ye Chong had seen earlier, the engineering mech's holographic scans had identified another five additional plant species.

Ye Chong collected specimens of each species, and stored them in the specimen storage device of the engineering mech. He was a capable alchemist, even without his tools. However, the chip that Lunatic Guan gave him had information on many ancient identification tests invented by the Guan family. These tests may be detailed and laborious, but they utilized traditional methods and relied less on modern apparatus.

From that chip, Ye Chong understood more about these plants. As the earliest field that branched out of botany, alchemy knowledge was far more useful and practical to study plants.

With five times the gravitational force acting on him, Ye Chong felt lethargic from his study.

Perhaps due to the strong gravity, the continent was extremely tough, feeling like alloy under his feet. The plants also boasted strong leaves and stems.

Soon, Ye Chong returned into Han Jia. He finally used the rope ladder that he had not used all this while to climb up. With five

times the gravitational force, Ye Chong dared not climb up into Han Jia's pilot cabin. At this height, Ye Chong felt as vulnerable as an infant. Every move was difficult. This made him yearned for the easy movements that he could make under normal gravity. However, he quickly dismissed such useless thoughts. The only way now was forward.

There was no choice - he had to adapt! Five times the gravitational force ... Ye Chong's expression was calm, but his eyes shone brightly with determination.

He took a deep breath, and Han Jia began marching forward on the plain.

This time, Ye Chong covered 350 kilometers. If it was in outer space, this distance would only take a short while. However, due to energy conservation and safety measures, the flight had took a full three hours for Han Jia.

Fortunately, the journey was smooth. Aside from the three new plant species that Ye Chong discovered, there was nothing interesting. Here were a good many herbivores that Ye Chong had seen earlier. Beside them, Ye Chong did not see any other animals, much less carnivores.

However, Ye Chong did not let down his guard. He knew that while the carnivores remained unseen, they must be here somewhere. Nature was curious this way. Even in a harsh environment like the trash planet, carnivores still sat at the top of the food chain.

Ye Chong found something new again.

Water. There was water here. In fact, ever since he saw the plants, Ye Chong had guessed that there must be water around here. However, when he finally saw it, his heart still jumped with joy.

This was a large river. According to Han Jia's holographic

scanning results, the widest part of the river was a good 15 kilometers wide. The river was calm, but Han Jia still managed to calculate the speed of the river flow. The only question was, where did the water come from?

This river divided the continent into two. Ye Chong pondered for a moment, before flying Han Jia across the river.

Just when Ye Chong reached the center of the river, Han Jia's sharp alarm that had been quiet so far began to ring.

Ye Chong groaned.

Ye Chong's reaction did not slow down due to the abnormal gravity.

A 10-meter thick tentacle suddenly rushed out magnificently from the river's surface and came straight for Han Jia.

The attack was sudden, but Ye Chong had enough time to react. Mech pilots often had to make decisions in milliseconds, or they would not stand a chance in modern fast-paced mech battles.

Han Jia quickly unsheathed its two daggers and pulled its hands over the chest in a cross, the two daggers shielding before its chest. It was too late to evade using the main engines, but with slight adjustment of the auxiliary engines, Han Jia's position shifted to face the enormous tentacle.

Ye Chong was shocked deep inside. Such a huge tentacle suggested an enormous creature under the waters. The brown tentacle was covered with curly patterns of green, making it look like a log entwined with seaweed.

Bang!

Han Jia flew straight towards the other side like a baseball off a bat.

The powerful impact left Ye Chong's head spinning. This kind of attack should have been manageable, but with five times the

gravitational force, the force on his body was five-fold, and the pain was unbearable. Without Han Jia's hydraulic suspension system, Ye Chong would have been squished into a meat patty.

He felt a long absent feeling of wanting to throw up, and had to breathe deeply a few times to suppress the undesirable urge.

Before Ye Chong could react any further, he suddenly found himself already on the other side, and still flying further. Han Jia was still flying from the momentum of the impact. One could appreciate how strong the attack actually was. Ye Chong quickly steadied Han Jia to avoid a crash landing.

His two daggers were bloodied, a sure sign that the tentacle was injured as well. Ye Chong was confident of the sharpness of his daggers. The attacker must have suffered, probably with a large gaping wound to show.

Suddenly, the center of the river riled up like boiling water.

Chapter 264: Humans

Out of the enraged waters emerged an obelisk of a head, a terrifying creature. If not for the three large eyes at the top of this mountain of a creature, Ye Chong would have thought it was the riverbed pushed up by some tectonic shift underneath the waters.

Even the 10-meter tall Han Jia looked tiny compared to the creature. This was the largest animal Ye Chong had ever seen.

The three black eyes were arranged to form a triangle, and they were staring angrily at Ye Chong.

Then came a screech, like the sound of metal brushing against metal. Ye Chong watched the creature calmly. Aside from his slightly pale complexion, a sign of the severity of his injury due to the creature's attack, he looked like his usual self.

Usually, Ye Chong would have been shocked to see such a massive creature. However, he was strangely very calm now, not even perturbed in the slightest. The place was filled with too much strangeness that Ye Chong was getting used to seeing unusual things.

He was already on land. The creature was obviously a marine animal, probably not too difficult to handle. What Ye Chong wanted to avoid the most now were flying beasts. He knew from when he first saw the herbivores that the animals here could move very fast despite the strong gravitational force. If the herbivores were already so impressive, the animals that can fly must be even more so. More importantly, Han Jia's advantage of flying would be for naught. If he had the advantage of flying, Ye Chong would at least have the option of retreating if he could not win against his opponent.

The creature in the river seemed to know that it could not threaten Ye Chong. It did not come closer, but continued to stare angrily at Ye Chong while screeching sharply.

If Ye Chong were to have a bird's eye view of the plain right now, he would see an extraordinary spectacle. Animals of all kinds were running away from the center that was the huge creature in the river.

Ye Chong took another glance at the creature in the river, and immediately flew away with Han Jia.

He had no intention of fighting with that creature. It was obviously at the top of the local food chain. Besides, Han Jia was not suitable for long range combat, making it difficult to fight against the creature. Just the 10-meter thick tentacle was enough to cause great destruction.

This sudden attack also led Ye Chong to be even more careful. However, to his surprise, he did not encounter any other animals as he flew on. There were a few times when he saw on the holographic screen that some animals very far away from him were running away.

This was curious to Ye Chong. While he could not understand why this happened, the lack of any animals in his way made his journey faster.

After another full day, still nothing happened. The flat plain was slowly beginning to show some contours. Ye Chong even found three mountain ranges that were about a thousand meters above ground level. However, this did not obstruct Han Jia's advance.

It was not just the geography that was changing. Here, the animals came in greater variety, much more than at the plains.

This astronomical body was far larger than Ye Chong had anticipated. Until now, Han Jia still could not detect the edges of this continent.

Suddenly, the holographic scanning system began to ping.

A group of humans in weird clothing were attacking a wild animal that was about 7 meters tall.

Humans? How could there be humans around here? Ye Chong was startled. His surprise quickly turned into uncontained joy. No one would be able to stay composed after experiencing loneliness for so long, and finally finding other members of his own species.

However, why were there humans here?

Ye Chong suppressed his happiness for the moment and studied those people.

There were seven in total, all wearing a light purple shirt, probably woven out of the local vegetation. As an alchemist, Ye Chong had a keen understanding of plants. They were all small framed, probably due to the gravity. However, their movements were agile and quick, even quicker than the herbivores that Ye Chong had seen.

Ye Chong could not help but be surprised at their physical strength. With five times the usual gravitational force, even Ye Chong himself could not manage their speed. However, their weapons were too shabby - they were all using pikes made out of some unknown type of wood.

Were they primitives? Ye Chong was stupefied. His joy was considerably dampened. If these were primitive humans, communication would be a problem.

Ye Chong did not expose himself, but continued to hide behind a rock from afar, watching them.

The wild beast did not seem to be faring well against the primitives, already wounded in a few places. An experienced hunter like Ye Chong could see in an instant that the animal would yield, sooner or later. The wild beast had antlers shaped like tree branches, sharp as knives. Its four thick, hooved feet could stomp down on a person with fatal results. Its tail was long and strangely curled into a bunch, like a woman's hair bun. However, from the holographic screen, Ye Chong could see that the tail could electrocute like an electric eel.

The primitives must know this as well. They attacked faster and harder, hoping to end it soon.

Just when they thought victory was close, the wild beast dimmed eyes suddenly lifted and saw Han Jia. Ye Chong saw its eyes clearly, and was very surprised. Abruptly, the animals' eyes showed horror. The beast let out a growl of hopelessness and began to fight back stronger than before.

This sudden change threw the primitives off, and they struggled to react. They did not expect the animal to suddenly go crazy.

There was a terrifying shriek. It came from a man, injured by the beast's antlers. The strong impact had thrown him far back, blood spilling all over him. However, the animal was absorbed in its violence to care about the attacks coming from the other primitives. It lowered its head and charged, antlers pointing straight ahead while its four hooves thrummed the ground, heading straight towards its fallen victim.

The seven-meter tall beast came charging with terrifying ferocity. It seemed to have decided to kill the man, uncaring of the pike stabbings from the other primitives.

Cries of fear and surprise filled the air.

Ye Chong stayed where he was, frozen, as he continued to stare disbelievingly at those primitives.

Sang Ling bit down on his lips, watching as the reinvolt charged towards Sang Fan. The beast had suddenly gotten into a frenzy, wounding Sang Fan with its antlers. It ignored all their attacks and had escaped from their surrounding formation. Sang Ling dared not hesitate. He tightened his right arm, pike close against his arm, and threw hard. The pike flew straight towards the reinvolt's head.

Shunk! The pike embedded itself deep into the reinvolt's rump. "Aaa-oooh!" The reinvolt howled in pain, staggering for while before steadying itself and continued charging towards Sang Fan.

The reinvolt's eyes were spitting fire, filled with manic rage.

The primitives quickly aimed with their own pikes. Swish swish swish! The pikes all hit their mark, stabbing deep into the animal's rump. The reinvolt howled painfully again! "Aaa-oooh!" It was filled with anger and despair. The animal ran even faster.

Sang Fan struggled to get up. There was a long, deep gash starting from his upper left shoulder, going down to his chest. Blood was gushing out, and he could see the bones underneath. Sang Fan braced himself against the pain, his face white as a sheet as he watched the reinvolt coming closer and closer.

The reinvolt's antlers shone with a dangerous, chilling glare.

"No ..." Sang Ling shouted helplessly.

Ye Chong's eyes widened. His hands swept across Han Jia's controls, light as air.

He understood that word!

Just when everyone thought Sang Fan was dead for certain, a silver figure came from behind Sang Fan and blocked the reinvolt's terrifying antlers.

They only saw a blur of movement.

The reinvolt's hooves stopped moving.

In that abrupt shift from horrified screams to utter silence, no one understood what had happened.

They watched in a daze as the reinvolt howled pitifully and regretfully, then dropped into complete silence. The whole place was silent, and everyone was confused.

When they finally recovered, they found that the reinvolt was pinned to the ground with a huge, silver dagger, and its antlers were sliced through.

The dagger was sharp! Everyone inhaled sharply. Sang Fan finally could not stand it anymore, and sat heavily on the ground.

However, Sang Ling's eyes quickly looked behind Sang Fan. As the clever one, she recovered the quickest.

She could finally see clearly the huge figure standing behind Sang Fan.

"Heavens! Isn't that ..." Sang Ling could not believe her eyes.

Chapter 265: Sang Family Village

The people marched quickly ahead, one of them carrying the reinvolt over his shoulder. Everyone was quiet, thinking about the massive thing that was flying slowly behind, following them.

It was a mech. Sang Ling recognized it. The Sang Family Village's shrine had seven mechs on display, but they were ancient compared to this mech. In fact, the comparison was not an exaggeration. The seven mechs had been passed down for a few generations, known by every member of the Sang family.

"Mechs really could fly ..." Sang Ling took a peek at Han Jia, flying above, her eyes filled with envy. In the legends, mechs could fly, but today she had finally seen it for the first time. The techniques to fly the seven mechs in the shrine had been long lost. They were now only a symbol of the courage and determination of their ancestors.

Sang Ling quickly lost her initial excitement. She began to worry about Sang Fan's injuries. As childhood friends, she and Sang Fan were the most famous pair in the village. Sang Fan and her were both the most capable and outstanding of their generation.

It was this guy's fault! Sang Ling could not help but stared angrily at Han Jia. The dagger had blood from the three-eyed giant squid, it was no wonder that the reinvolt suddenly turned crazy. Just a tiny bit of the three-eyed giant squid's scent could trigger the reinvolt's fear due to its sensitive sense of smell.

However, if the mech had not interfered, Sang Fan would have ... Sang Lin shuddered. Besides, the guy had even offered medical supplies. With that offer of assistance, they really could not blame him now. His medicine was truly miraculous. Just by swallowing a tiny pill, Sang Fan's breathing steadied. While he was unconscious now, his situation seemed a lot better.

What a powerful mech! Sang Ling was impressed. The mech had

injured a three-eyed giant squid. Before she met this mech, she never thought that anything could ever hurt that giant beast.

Ye Chong sat in the pilot cabin, his face calm. Inside, however, he was not nearly so peaceful.

These primitives spoke the same language as him, and communication was not a problem. Could this be part of the Five Galaxies? That was Ye Chong's first guess. Could the primitives be part of some savage tribe? That thought was quickly dismissed by Ye Chong.

If there was really such a strange place in the Five Galaxies, it would have been discovered.

From the primitives, he learned that they came from a place called the Shang Family Village. The term "village" was unfamiliar to Ye Chong. He imagined it to be some kind of city.

The other party was cautious against Ye Chong, and did not speak much. Ye Chong accepted this easily. If it were him, he would be even more cautious. At first, Ye Chong thought they came from some savage tribe, but they had all recognized mechs. That surprised him very much.

Nevertheless, their clothing and weapons felt very primitive to Ye Chong.

The two parties did not exchange many words. According to the woman in the group, any questions can be directed to the village head.

Village head? What an peculiar title.

Ye Chong quickly noticed something interesting - the group practiced strict discipline. They worked together seamlessly, delegating tasks in reasonable ways. This reminded Ye Chong of an army troop! They were very much like the Sanctuary's standard combat squad.

This made Ye Chong suspect even more that they came from a

savage tribal society.

Ye Chong was intrigued by their physique. The seven-meter tall reinvolt was heavy, but the man heaving the prey seemed quite relaxed, and did not fall behind.

Finally, they reached the Sang Family Village. The village was much smaller than Ye Chong imagined. The entire village was surrounded by a six-meter tall fence, probably to ward against animal attacks. However, if a mech were to attack this village, it would only be too easy.

There were no anti air attack measures, no field interference facilities, no long range attack weapons. Ye Chong made a quick assessment of the village. His conclusion was this - if he wanted to escape, they would not be able to stop him. This made Ye Chong feel safer. While they were of the same species, and communication was not an issue, Ye Chong still dared not be careless.

Han Jia's simple scanning system was now quite handy.

There were about 100,000 inhabitants here. Ye Chong shook his head. This city was too small. In the Five Galaxies, any city would be home to at least a few million. Everything here was primitive, the exact image of a savage tribal society.

The return of Sang Ling and others created a slight commotion. Sang Fan's injury had everyone busy. However, he was soon sent to a tiny purple coloured straw hut. Just as the people were about to disperse, they finally noticed Han Jia.

"A mech, it's really a mech .." A villager muttered incoherently.

"It's truly a mech ..." Similar utterances were heard in the crowd, all filled with wonder.

Han Jia was now surrounded by a dense crowd.

When Ye Chong came out of Han Jia, the village suddenly fall into a short silence.

When Ye Chong withdrew Han Jia with its dimension keystone, everyone was shocked. The sight of a huge machine suddenly vanishing made quite an impression.

Ye Chong quickly found himself stuck in the middle of the crowd, unable to leave.

"Make way, make way please." A path quickly formed amongst the crowd. In came an old man, supported by Sang Ling, as he slowly approached Ye Chong.

"Cough, cough, young man, how do you do? I'm the village head, Sang De." The village head coughed twice before finally speaking slowly.

Ye Chong was always respectful towards the elderly. He bowed slightly and replied, "Village Head, how do you do? I'm a mech pilot and I've lost my way. I hope to have your assistance."

Sang De nodded, and spoke to his people, "Go back to your own businesses now." The village head was heeded. Everyone left, and only some children were left hiding in a corner, watching them.

"Let's talk at my place," the village head, Sang De motioned for Ye Chong to follow.

Ye Chong and the village head had a pleasant conversation. Ye Chong finally had a rough understanding of the village. Sang Family Village was the only human settlement here. Their ancestors seemed to have come here to avoid some huge disaster elsewhere.

Their tribe had lived here for 500 years. Before that, they came from a galaxy called He Yue.

He Yue Galaxy? Where was that? Could it be an earlier name for one of the Five Galaxies? 500 years ago, the galaxies might be known with different names. However, Ye Chong could not be sure. He had almost zero knowledge of the Five Galaxies' history.

Ye Chong's request to stay was quickly accepted by Sang De. The

cunning village head knew that this young man was a capable fighter, and could help defend the village. As for his origin, Sang De did not care for it. If the man wanted to harm the village, then they could not stop him. If that was the case, why not maintain a good relationship with him?

Besides, 500 years had passed, and they knew nothing of the advances of the outside world. Their world was still so primitive. All this while, this had been a concern for every village head. When their first ancestors arrived here with their mechs, they had sacrificed most of their combatants to protect the villagers. All the engineers died. This caused the Sang Family Village to be the way it was today. Moreover, when the backup energy cells were used up, all the mechs became useless. Until today, the problem of powering the mechs was still unsolved, and no one alive knew how to pilot a mech.

Now that they had a visitor from the outside world, and a mech pilot with his own mech at that, the Sang family's 500 years of stagnation finally had a glimmer of hope.

However, Ye Chong was not thinking about these things. The best option for him now would be stay in the village. He did not know how to return to the Five Galaxies, and wondering around aimlessly would be foolish. This place had too many oddities. Besides, the people here had a history going back 500 years, and were familiar with this place. For now at least, he would not have to worry about survival.

Ye Chong followed the young man called Sang Pu. Sang Pu was around his age, reaching 170 meters in heights, a tall stature compared to the rest of the villagers. Sang Pu did not speak much, but seemed to be a man of reputation amongst his peers. He was rumored to be the next village head.

"These are the mechs from our ancestors," Sang Pu explained with reverence towards his ancestors.

Seven mechs with rusty spots all over them were displayed in the shrine. These mechs were all huge, towering at around 20 meters tall, like huge iron men. The thick armor made them look unwieldy, like a metal lump. It was apparent that mechanical techniques were still quite undeveloped back then. One had to use thickened armor to protect the mech pilot in the mech.

A 500-year-old mech was definitely something that Ye Chong was interested in. Since he first heard about these seven mechs, his first request was to pay them a visit. The village head agreed easily. Even the oldest mechs in a mech museum in the Five Galaxies were only about 300 years old. Ye Chong could not help his excitement at these seven 500-year-old mechs!

The mechs' internal structures were crude and simple. There were no hydraulic suspension systems. The circuits were made of metallic wires, and not photon circuits. There was no holographic scanning system, only an ancient radar ...

A mech like this was far worse than the most low level Raven mech. However, Ye Chong still felt very excited. In reality, any mech engineer would be interested in these ancient mechs. This opportunity was not to be missed.

These mechs would not be able to inspire Ye Chong with new ideas, but he still crawled into all of them and inspected in detail. In his professional opinion, mechs like these were less than basic. However, for something that was made 500 years ago, one cannot ask for more.

Sang Pu asked, "Are these mechs still functional?" He looked at Ye Chong, hopeful. These seven mechs had been kept here for 500 years. To the people of the Sang Family Village, they should be warriors, not historical relics.

Ye Chong shook his head. "No. They're too rusted. Some of the joints lack maintenance, and cannot be bent anymore. Besides, they use some kind of organic fuel. I'm not familiar with them." In

fact, Ye Chong was already quite surprised to find these mechs so well preserved after 500 years.

Ye Chong's reply made Sang Pu feel deeply disappointed. Ye Chong could see those emotions in his eyes. However, Ye Chong was helpless as well.

Ye Chong was also immediately reminded of Han Jia's energy problem. The backup energy cells were almost used up. If he could not find any new and suitable fuel, Han Jia would probably end up being put on display with these mechs here.

Nonetheless, haste would not solve this problem. There would not be any energy cell charging devices here, so the only option left was to find a replacement.

For now, he could only minimize his usage of Han Jia. It was best if he used Han Jia only when desperate.

After all, the people here had lived their lives all this while without mechs. Ye Chong believed that he would be able to defend himself, even without his mech.

It was soon meal time. Sang Pu led Ye Chong to the village head's house. Ye Chong saw the woman from the group that brought him here earlier. Ye Chong nodded to her slightly, and sat beside Sang Pu.

Sang Ling humphed softly, and ignored Ye Chong as she began to eat.

Since the woman did not greet him back, Ye Chong did not press further. Instead, he nodded to Sang De. The village head laughed heartily, "Food is simple here, nothing grand to boast about, I hope you'll like it!"

By now, Ye Chong could tackle these social pleasantries easily. "You're too kind. Please call me Ye."

Sang De laughed again. "Alright, I'll call you Ye, and you can just call me Village Head."

On the plate before Ye Chong was a piece of steak, with some blue berries of some kind on the side. Ye Chong did not recognize the meat, but he knew what the berries were. On the plains on the other side of the river, there were many plants with these blue little berries.

Ye Chong picked up one of them and studied it closely. Unlike when it was on the tip of the plant, it no longer glowed with that faint blue color.

Seeing Ye Chong taking interest in the blue berry, Sang Pu introduced, "This is our main source of food, we call it mayaberry. Go ahead, try it, it's not bad. This steak is from the meat of that reinvolt you killed today. Reinvolt meat is tender and delicious."

Ye Chong threw a mayaberry into his mouth and chewed. A fragrance began to spread in his mouth, with a little sweetness. He ate another one. To Ye Chong, this was far better than on the trash planet. He had never tasted such delicious fruits over there.

The village head and Sang Pu smiled, looking at Ye Chong enjoying his meal. Only Sang Ling still looked cool.

Eyeing the steak on his plate, Ye Chong took out his dagger and made to slice it.

Sang Pu saw the dagger in Ye Chong's hands, and his eyes glowed. He urged, "Ye, can you let me have a look at that weapon of yours?"

Chapter 266: History

As he received the dagger, Sang Pu's calm composure gave way to an overwhelming stream of emotions. He flipped the dagger this way and that, studying it closely like a priceless treasure. Sang Ling was also staring intently at the dagger in Sang Pu's hands.

"It's only a dagger, do they need to be so excited?" Ye Chong thought to himself, vexed.

Seeing Ye Chong's confusion, the village head explained, "Hehe, Ye, please forgive us, it's their first time seeing a metal weapon. Pu, let me have a look."

Sang Pu quickly passed the dagger to the village head.

"What fine craftsmanship!" Sang De exclaimed, "It's sharp, tougher and stronger than bitterwood. Pu, get me a bitterwood pike here."

Sang Pu went to a corner of the house, where a few of the pikes Ye Chong had seen earlier leaned against the wall. Sang Pu took two of them, and upon noticing Ye Chong's curiosity, passed one to Ye Chong with a smile.

Ye Chong studied the bitterwood pike in his hands. Each bitterwood pike was around two meters long, its shaft just thick enough to grip. It felt weighty in hand. Ye Chong bent it slightly forcefully, and the bitterwood pike only bent into an arch without breaking as was usually expected. The tip of the pike was ground sharp. The shaft had natural-looking detailed spirals on it.

Ye Chong was quietly impressed. The wood was tough. What interested him more were the rounds of spiraling patterns on the shaft. They seemed to be aerodynamically designed. Once thrown into the air, the pike would spin about itself, not only increasing the impact of the throw but also enabling steadier flight.

Ye Chong had never seen any primitive weapon with such

advanced designs. He was deeply interested in them.

The village head took a bitterwood pike from Sang Pu and swung it lightly. The five-centimeter thick shaft was easily cut in half.

Everyone but Ye Chong gasped, "Whoa!"

"It's just like in the legends!" Sang De gently tested the dagger's edge as he muttered to himself. Everyone else looked at the dagger in his hands, enchanted by the weapon's might.

Ye Chong was even more confused now. Legend? Daggers were quite common, what's the fuss about? In terms of design, the dagger was not particularly laudable. It was shaped exactly like Gu Shaoze's dagger. Gu Shaoze may be a mechanics genius, but he was no weaponsmith. To Ye Chong, the dagger's angle design was horrible, but he had gotten used to it and never thought of replacing it.

In terms of design, the dagger was far exceeded by the bitterwood pike.

After a long moment, the village head broke his reverie and smile apologetically to Ye Chong. "Ye, please excuse me. I've lived my long life to this day, and this is my first time seeing a metal weapon. It's just as our ancestors described."

First time seeing? Even the most primitive savage tribes would have metal weapons! Besides, from the seven mechs displayed in the shrine, Ye Chong could see that they were at least able to build huge machines like them, the backward metallurgy notwithstanding. How can they not be able to make even a metal dagger?

Ye Chong could not help but asked, "So you have no metal weapons at all?"

Seeing Sang Pu and Sang Ling still in a daze, the village head replied slowly, "None. When our ancestors first escaped to this

place, the journey was dangerous. Our population was 1.7 million, but only half a million people arrived here safely."

Sang De continued painfully, "The disaster came without warning, our ancestors had no time to prepare. According to records, mechs were only newly invented, and the Sang Family tribe had the largest mech squad in the He Yue galaxy, with a total of 3,000 mech pilots. Back then, mech pilot was not a common occupation. The tribe leader was under tremendous pressure when he first founded the mech squad. However, most of the people believed that mechs represented the future of technology."

The village head spoke lowly, like narrating an ancient legend. Everyone listened to him intently, and even Ye Chong could not maintain his calm expression.

"Back then, the disaster came unexpectedly, but the tribe leader had prepared well. All our knowledge, from the most basic metallurgy skills to the Sang Family's core technologies were recorded in a chip. This was to prevent these knowledge from being lost forever. They made 300 copies of the chip, which meant that out of the 3,000 mech pilots in the mech squad, one in ten had a chip with them. Everyone thought that, with so many copies of the chip, it should be easy to keep at least a few of them intact. After all, back then, the Sang Family was one of the four most prosperous aristocratic families in the He Yue galaxy. Moreover, the Sang Family's mech squad was the strongest in the entire galaxy. Everyone believed that the precautions would be sufficient. Even in a whole new world, with this knowledge, the Sang Family would thrive again without issues."

Sang De's expression grew even more pained, and his voice trembled as he continued, "However, the unexpected had happened.

"The only exit out of the He Yue galaxy was obstructed back then, so the tribe had to break through this enormous asteroid belt. No one expected to see the terrifying Red Sea."

"Red Sea?" Sang Ling interrupted. This was the first time she had heard of this.

"Yes, the Red Sea," said the village head. "It's a huge expanse of empty space, filled with a thick red mist, stretching out endlessly like the sea. Our ancestors called it the Red Sea."

Ye Chong was shocked. Wasn't that the red mist where he got separated from Mu?

"No one thought that this red mist would be so dangerous. The red mist interfered with the radars, it was impossible to know which direction was which. Many lost their ways in the mist. However, the disaster had only just begun.

"Metal was actually very sensitive to the red mist. When they flew into the middle of the Red Sea, the mist grew thicker. Starships were tangled with numerous mysterious red tendrils. Almost all the mechs were deployed to cut off those tendrils. However, once the mechs exited the starships, the red tendrils would mysteriously appear and bind them up tightly, killing the pilots. The people on the starships watched as the countless red tendrils devoured their mechs."

"So that was it," Ye Chong thought to himself. The red mist would react with metal once it reached a critical density. No wonder Coxcomb was wrapped up tight with the tendrils. It appeared that Han Jia's skeletal parts had allowed him to escape.

Ye Chong could not help but felt anxious about Mu and Shang. Mu and Shang were also made of metal ... If only he could get in touch with them right now, then he'd be able to inform them of this peculiarity, then Mu would be able to find a solution. However ...

Ye Chong smiled wryly to himself. He breathed in deeply a few times and tried not to think about them.

Ye Chong asked, "How did they escape?"

Sang De explained, "Most escaped using the emergency pods. The pods were not made of metal, to reduce their weight. I have no idea what they're made of. Only about a hundred thousand of them escaped, and only 15 were mech pilots. They were mostly injured beforehand, and so were not deployed to cut off the red tendrils, thus surviving the incident. However, food and water were scarce, and people died along the way. When they finally reached here, the entire Sang Family was only left with about fifty thousand. Only seven mech pilots were left, and none of them had the chip. Besides, without proper medical treatment, they all succumbed to their injuries eventually. And so, we had to start again from the very beginning. Out of the fifty thousand, a few were scientists, but here, where the gravity is stronger, and vicious animals were abundant, we had no protection. In the first month, twenty thousand died of either starvation or illness. The scientists were physically weaker, and they died soon too."

The village head spoke with a sigh, with a saddened voice. Sang Pu and Sang Ling were both surprised. Ye Chong finally understood why this place was so primitive.

"The scientists wrote down everything they knew before they died, but in the end, no one could understand them. With the harsh living conditions, the only ones who survived were the physically stronger combat experts. Without any necessary knowledge foundations, they couldn't understand the knowledge left behind. The scientists had only written down their most forefront intellectual ideas, but did not provide any basic knowledge as a starting point. That is why we are what we are today," Sang De explained helplessly.

Sang Pu and Sang Ling could only listen wordlessly.

Ye Chong nodded in understanding. Indeed, without any foundational knowledge, forefront knowledge would only be lost to the layperson. Such was the nature of high level knowledge.

It was no wonder that the villagers were using such primitive

weapons. Given the harsh environment, they still managed to survive and prosper here. Ye Chong could not help but grow even more respectful of them.

Suddenly, Ye Chong thought of his time on the trash planet, the way he struggled alone to survive, and found that he and them were not too different after all!

Chapter 267: It's a Deal

"Perhaps I can help you make metal weapons," Ye Chong said this casually, but it was like dropping a bomb into the room.

"You mean it?" Even someone as weathered as Sang De could not keep his calm, his eyes shining feverently. Metal weapons might be so common in the outside world, but here it was more than a rarity. With metal weapons, the entire Sang Family tribe could make a quantum leap in strength.

Sang De had been the village head for so many years, and had always tried to find ways to increase their chances of survival. However, no one was able to understand the knowledge their ancestors had left behind. Now that this opportunity presented itself, how could he pass it up?

Was this really a blessing from Heaven to the pitiful, to give the Sang Family this glimmer of hope? Old Sang De put his hands together and muttered a silent prayer.

As for Sang Pu and Sang Ling, they were both shocked. They stared directly at Ye Chong, unable to see how this seemingly ordinary man could make such an offer.

Ye Chong caressed the spiral patterns on the bitterwood pike, as though he did not notice their stares. In fact, Ye Chong was not offering help out of kindness - he had not become so altruistic just yet. This offer was calculatively made, now that his survival depended on the strength of the Sang Family Village. It would be in his interest to make them stronger.

Besides, Ye Chong had other concerns. It would be difficult if he had to find a new source of energy by himself. Wouldn't it be better to let the natives, the inhabitants of the Sang Family Village to help?

Ye Chong also thought of his greatest concern. The Red Sea was

triggered by metal, and the chances of Coxcomb escaping was too small. However, Coxcomb had enough food and water to last Zhu Ling, Lian Yue and Little Rock for quite some time. As for Mu and Shang, who did not need to eat, they would only hibernate when they run out of energy. Even so, Coxcomb had enough energy cells to last the mech for a long while - Ye Chong knew better than anyone of Coxcomb's resources.

It was highly probable that Mu, Shang and the rest were still trapped in the Red Sea. If he could build enough skeleton mechs ... No, they did not have to be mechs, any machine that could fly in space would be enough. If Ye Chong could search the Red Sea intensively, it would increase his chances of finding Coxcomb.

In any case, he would not leave Mu and Shang behind, of this he was certain. He remembered the time when the stellar flare was coming, and Mu had tried to save him by making that extremely risky warp jump.

The bond between him and the mech was no longer that of a mech pilot and a mech. Ye Chong would sacrifice his life to save them, if it came to it. He knew that they would do the same for him, even if the odds were definitely against them. This was true, even for that usually flippant Shang.

Of course, his plan was difficult to execute, and Ye Chong was not confident of success. Even so, he would do it. If he at least tried, the probability of success would be nonzero; if he did not try, then failure was certain.

This was not the first time Ye Chong had to make such a decision. He knew exactly what he should do.

After a full five minutes, Ye Chong saw that the three of them were still caught up with their thoughts. He spoke up slowly, "Calm yourselves. I haven't surveyed this place, so I don't know if there are suitable metal ores. Besides, I have conditions."

Ye Chong had to thank the elders at the Aurora. If they had not

provided Ye Chong with such solid foundation, he would not dare to make such a bold offer. Here, he will find no field dissociation apparatus, no metal purification devices. To process metal in this primitive environment would require the most basic and fundamental understanding of metal smelting. However, all this depended on finding suitable metal ores. If there was no ore, they would only be building a castle in the sky.

Old Sang De answered solemnly, "Whatever conditions you have, Ye, tell us, and we will do our best to fulfill them."

Sang Ling's expression was one of condescension and disgust. She did not think that the man would be such an opportunist. Sang Pu may have felt the same, but his expression betrayed nothing.

Ye Chong acted like he did not see Sang Ling's expression. In fact, he truly did not care. There are no free meals in this world. He had no reason to volunteer in helping him. Besides, Ye Chong did not feel that he was having an unfair advantage in this bargain.

Ye Chong replied plainly, "I need the Sang family to fulfill my three requests. I haven't decided on what they are, I'll let you know when it's time." Ye Chong had wanted to only ask for one request, but for some reason he thought of Shang. If it was that b*stard, he would definitely ask for more. Hence, Ye Chong decided in that split second to ask for three requests instead.

"Alright." Old Sang De promised without hesitation.

Ye Chong looked at the village head and said, "Think carefully about this. What I ask from you is dangerous, and will need significant manpower."

Old Sang De gave a significant look at Ye Chong and replied, "The Sang family had waited for 500 years without hope. Now that we finally have a glimmer of hope, the Sang family will not let this opportunity be wasted, no matter the risks."

Ye Chong said nothing, but he was quietly impressed with the old

man's determination.

Sang Pu was also watching him with fervent eyes. Ye Chong would not understand their helplessness and anger at having to live such primitive lives. Now that the opportunity presented itself, how could he let it go?

"Alright then, it's a deal," Ye Chong said this plainly, as though it had nothing to do with him.

"Aren't you scared that we'll go back on our word?" Sang Ling could not stand Ye Chong's look and blurted out. The moment the words left her mouth, she instantly regretted them.

Ye Chong said nothing, but his eyes suddenly turned into a chilling stare. A sharp killing intent flashed in his eyes. Go back on their word? If they really did, Ye Chong would make them regret it.

Ye Chong said nothing, but it was as though the room had suddenly been plunged into deep winter. A chilling sense crawled up their spines. The three of them shuddered inside despite themselves. Every younger member of the Sang family had his or her own share of fighting against wild beasts, and was familiar with this killing intent.

This was the first time they had encountered such a fierce killing intent! Even the three-eyed giant squid could not compare with what they were experiencing now!

This killing intent could not be nurtured by just killing a single person. Just how many people had this man killed? Sang Pu could not help taking another glance at the dagger in his hands. The dagger suddenly felt even more chilling to the touch.

They had thought that an angel had designed to visit them, but it was actually the devil himself!

The weathered Old Sang De's expression was unreadable, as he smiled wryly inside. He knew not if he had made the right

decision. There was never a happy ending for the man who made a deal with the devil. Who knew just exactly what his deal with this man would mean for the future of the Sang Family?

Even with ten thousand villagers, they were defenseless against his mech. Besides, Han Jia was an advanced level mech. This was the power of technology.

Old Sang De said solemnly, "The Sang Family had always kept our word. In the name of the Sang family ancestors, I promise that the Sang family will do its best to fulfill your requests, dear sir. If we failed to do so, may the Sang Family be damned for all eternity."

Sang Pu and Sang Ling were horrified. Sang Ling's expression was one full of regret. She did not imagine that her careless words had led to the village head vowing in the name of their ancestors. To the Sang Family, vowing in the name of the ancestors was a solemn thing to do. It represented the most sacred and important of vows, never to be broken.

Ye Chong did not share the same sentiment about vows. To him, a vow was not reliable. Only strength was.

"Alright, let's not get ahead of ourselves, at least not until I make your first metal weapon," Ye Chong's casual reply made Sang Ling grit her teeth in anger, but she dared to speak so easily again. Her carelessness had forced Sang De to make that vow, and she regretted that very much.

"If you need any help, sir, all members of the Sang family are at your disposal," the village head spoke up, his expression sincere. If anyone could watch from the side and learn from him, it would be most invaluable. Old Sang De had also began to speak more respectfully to Ye Chong again, calling him "sir", and Ye Chong could not be bothered to correct him.

Ye Chong suddenly picked up the bitterwood pike beside him and asked, "Who designed the spirals on this shaft?" Ye Chong had

thought they were natural, but he knew upon touching them that they were carved by hand.

The three of them were surprised by this change of subject, and Sang Pu replied, "It's Sang Fan's work. Is there anything wrong with it?"

"Oh, then he'll be my assistant." Anyone who could design something like this must be quite capable.

Sang Pu looked ill at ease. "He was injured today, probably need some time to rest."

So it was the man who was injured earlier today. Ye Chong said casually, "Then I'll wait for him to get better." He still needed time to be more familiar with this place.

Having a Sang family member as his assistant was also a calculated measure, beneficial in the long run. He could delegate tasks for his assistant to take care of.

Without Mu and Shang by his side, Ye Chong was like a child without support. He would have to start experimenting and exploring on his own.

Chapter 268: Lavagold

The light emitted from the fruit of Hampered Bask was warm and gentle, like a touch of morning in Spring, illuminating the entire room. It was the first time Ye Chong came across such unusual sprout, that he could not find any entry regarding it on the encyclopedia gifted by Lunatic Guan. Twinkleblue, the light-emitting plant Ye Chong found in the encyclopedia, was rather giving off a gleam of the night sky compared to glisten of Hampered Bask. And so he heard that the Hampered Bask also happened to be the sole lighting plants among the members of Sang family in the village.

The ceiling was fully engulfed by the purplish blue vines, where at the center the Hampered Bask fruit hung like the sleeker chandelier with its petite size of being as large as one's fist while emanating an intriguing fruity aroma. The scent was poking Ye Chong's nose, it was tickling his gourmet sense so much that on several occasions he would rather remain in darkness while his hands approached the ceiling and nearly plucked the glowing fruit to have a taste.

Ye Chong shifted his thoughts back onto the materials before him, which were staring into his eyes with their expressive foreignness. Practically speaking, judging by the materials he had discovered thus far, most of them shouted literally foreign to him. He was not even sure if he could make anything likely to be called a metallic weapon with these materials.

This... mildstone that rested in his palm with heat leaking from its partially transparent body for example, seemed to be commonly used material among the villagers. It was so domestically common that even the steak Ye Chong had before was grilled using it. Its rate of heat emittance was considerably sluggish, so there would never be a problem of overcooking one's food or even one's hand, although the cooking process took much longer than what Ye

Chong had experienced in other planets. The villagers seemed to have a practice of storing a certain amount of mildstone in every room to maintain the temperature indoors.

Mildstone was technically something new to Ye Chong's perception.

He gave a grip, then a rub, his fingers rolled the smooth crystallization back and fro. The warmth reminded him of a mini heater.

His approach of metallurgy identified such stone as part of the energy ore category. The basic apparatus on the engineering mech was able to return an amazing figure on the amount of energy imbued within the stone. Ye Chong would love to perform a detailed analysis on its component but he lacked the necessary apparatus to do so. Similarly he could not carry out any meaningful experiment. Only if he was on the Coxcomb, he would have found out a way to utilize the energy.

And there he was, stuck on a virtually remote village without even the fundamental facility to aid his research. As someone who had gotten use on the most avant-garde devices, Ye Chong was not feeling easy of his situation.

"Sir, I'm here," said Sang Fan at the door.

Ye Chong flinched, as he hardly discerned Sang Fan's footsteps till Sang Fan was right by the door.

An expert! Commented Ye Chong in his mind.

Sang Fan was not tall, with a height about 1.65 meters. Most likely due to the effects of strong gravitational force here, all villagers turned out to be dwarfish by nature, where someone who stood 1.7 meter high could be considered as someone with the body of a model. Sang Fan's body was not the hefty kind, it was fit and lean. His eyes were lustrous as they rolled around the room actively.

"Oh, so you're Sang Fan?" asked Ye Chong flatly, even though curiosity was twitching inside him, as his mind was in a shock. Aren't you a quick healer, Sang Fan? Thought Ye Chong. He glanced at Sang Fan, whose body seemingly recovered. If it was not his slightly pale face, no one could tell he was the one who had just received a heavy blow on his life two days ago.

"Yes sir," politely the man replied. "The chief had me under your command." His eyes were large upon being informed that Ye Chong was going to make weapons for the Sang villagers. His eyes went larger when he heard Ye Chong asking him to be the assistant, he almost could feel the next step to heaven.

"You'll be my assistant from today onwards. Learn it properly. Learn with efforts. I could see the talent in you, don't waste it," Ye Chong sounded really like one of those elderlies from Aurora.

"Yes sir!" The formality intensified in his response.

"To begin..." The first task from Ye Chong was to sample all stones and plants around the village.

Sang Fan did not really understand what this craftsman was saying but he did not respond with skepticism as he ran to the chief right away, since this was not a task he could handle by himself.

Towards the task, the old chief also responded with bewilderment. It would be reasonable to sample minerals but... what does he want to do with plant samples? But well, I believe this Ye Chong is somebody who would do things for a reason, not on a whim. My men! The chief waved his hand and called upon all villagers to carry out the task right away.

All villagers from all walks of life were involved. Children, women searched the surroundings while the men would bring a few stones and plants every time they returned from their hunt outskirts.

And within the next few days, the room dedicated for Ye Chong's research had been flooded with all sorts of stones and plants.

On the following days what Master Ye Chong did was having tutorials with his new assistant on categorization of plants and mineralites. Sang Fan was seemingly the intelligent and quick learner. During the process Ye Chong would also brief Sang Fan on any ores he recognized, but whether Sang Fan caught it right away would depend on his own diligence.

Ye Chong first underwent a selection process on the stones, where most of them turned out to be rather worthless in his opinion. And among the stones which he could identify the values, only a handful of them appeared to be in his recollection.

And there was this particular ore which caught most of his attention, namely the Lavagold. It was not a kind of gold, rather it was a kind of alloy precisely speaking, as recorded in Mu's databank. Apparently, Lavagold also exerted excellent physical properties for an alloy. Its composition was not that complicated compared to the others, but it was rare. In no other way than extraction from nature the Lavagold could be acquired. Researchers so far had yet performed a successful formation of Lavagold through artificial means. And its rarity was absolute given the fact that it only appeared in a certain type of environment.

So he was holding this piece of Lavagold ore, where curvy gold lines finely rested over the surface of the tainted pebble like a stream of melted gold lava. That was probably how the ore got its name.

"Would you go and ask your men where they got this?" asked Ye Chong as he pass the Lavagold ore to Sang Fan.

Sang Fan responded with a flinch at first and then his expression looked overjoyed, as he sprinted away. It was the first different response from Ye Chong after hunting and gathering for so long,

obviously it would mean...

Wow... that speed. Amazed Ye Chong as he looked the man blasted off to the outside. He could actually run even under such potent gravitational force... Ye Chong was certainly impressed since he had yet gotten used to such tedious environment, the gravity pull was wearing him out. And he thought his body was strong, till he saw villagers like Sang Fan running...

Very soon after, Sang Fan brought the villager who found the piece of gold. The catch was, according to the villager, the place where the piece of gold was found turned out to be a certain distance away from the village. To escort Ye Chong safely, a team of exactly hundred men were sent along under the lead of Sang Pu. And one could imagine how grand it would be if 100 ace fighters escorted a single man in the 5 major galaxies.

Yes, they were indeed the ace fighters. Their steps were firm and their nature was calm. Ace! Total ace! Ye Chong reminisced his encounters with the fighters from all sorts of places before, and they could hardly fill half of the army around him. Several beasts appeared on the way but they did nothing to the army.

Cleaving touch, simple yet brutal! The real combat! The true fighting! Shocked Ye Chong in his mind. The martial arts developed over five centuries after tasting countless ounces of blood and murder, the techniques were simplistic and direct, no fancy movement, no swing, only the sound of bone cracking after a violent slam. And this, would be the true brawling technique.

Ironically, the brawling techniques that had been long abandoned in the outside world remained as the essential survival techniques here.

Well, Ye Chong did not shame himself as an outsider when he demonstrated his speed. The army advanced pretty quickly but never once Ye Chong was lagging behind. One may argue that such instance could not prove his speed, but that little tip to the toes he

made would change the story, as his body would fling itself to the front - a burst kind of speed, unlike the villagers who were stampeding in tiny quick steps at high frequency.

The standards were there among the villagers. They were trained, Ye Chong could tell from their disciplined marching. Nobody was chattering, there was the sound of stampeding and only the stampeding itself. Ye Chong was not the chatty kind either, so his mouth remained zipped without initiating conversation, as he sank at the centermost position in the team, a protected position where the members of the outermost layer would head out from time to time to perform scouting and observation.

Ye Chong was astonished by the discipline, he was confident that even the so-called soldiers from the 5 galaxies would be wetted by their cold sweats upon seeing the quality of the army here.

The stampeding stopped.

"It was at the lowest point between the two peaks at the front, right when we hunted a Tandem Peeper," pointed one of the villagers at the col.

Sang Pu waved his hand and 4 men sprinted their ways forward. Ye Chong was going to drop his jaws if he were to witness more of the unexpected speed among the villagers.

"They are the reconnoiter, sir," smiled Sang Pu upon seeing Ye Chong's expression. "They are good runners and good fighters too." The recon-what? Reconnoiter? It was the first time Ye Chong heard of such term. Technically anyone who knew their histories well would be able to tell what a term that had appeared in the war history of humanity countless times like reconnoiter was. Ye Chong was a history-illiterate however, so such term meant nothing to his mind, although he could kind of guess what that term with complicating syllable possibly meant judging by what the 4 men were doing.

They did not actually head directly through the entrance of the ridge. Instead, they launched themselves and climbed upon the slopes around the col. And they flung themselves over the mountain agilely. It only took them a few tens seconds before one of the patrols gestured them to proceed to safety.

The 60 villagers at the outer circle disengaged from their team and flooded into the col immediately. "A moment sir." And Sang Pu led Ye Chong and the last 35 villagers into the col only after the place had been confirmed to be safe.

Well, that was probably the best justification for their survivals on this planet. They certainly had the skills. Ye Chong was amazed.

The col was not that spacious, one could grasp every spot inside within one sight. No lava gold was discovered and no happy face was found on Sang Fan.

Ye Chong had not given up just yet, as he requested the villagers to back off.

He then deployed the engineering mech, which scared everybody else upon seeing a giant mech crawling out of nowhere. And as usual, Ye Chong the dexterous climbed right into his cabin without any rope. The difference was, nobody really cared what he was achieving. Climbing high barehanded was nothing new among the Sang villagers.

The villagers remained in awe nevertheless, including Sang Pu the sedate one, as owning a mech was like a fantasy, a wish of the fairytale for all the villagers from Sang.

And Ye Chong hopped off the engineering mech after 30 seconds.

Everyone set their eyes upon Ye Chong, as they wondered the intention of Ye Chong's every move, but one thing for sure - they had faith in this young man.

"There," pointed one corner of the col. "Dig it," Ye Chong

instructed.

Chapter 269: Gravity Bind

The villagers were identified as the elites for a reason. They were selected obviously for their high efficiency and disciplined obedience. Thought Ye Chong as he glimpsed at the tiny pile of Lavagold ores before him. "Here," said Ye Chong to Sang Pu. "Mark the place down, the Lavagold content here is rich." Sang Pu nodded in comprehension.

Ye Chong immediately sank himself into the world of researches after they had returned to the village. He remembered it clearly, every bit of characteristic of Lavagold, but never once he had been exposed to the actual ore itself, it felt like his expertise going back to square one.

Well, he was fortunate to possess a formidable foundation of his knowledge, for he even was considerably informed of the metallurgical approaches by the ancient, which was something alien to the modernity since nobody really learned exactly how the extraction of metals worked after the invention of Magnetron-based separator. But Ye Chong knew it, and he believed he could extract Lavagold from its ore without the aid of the avant-garde. This was certainly one reward he got from the constant interaction with Aurora back then.

He started reminiscing the theoretical knowledge regarding this, as he tried reorganizing all the available options before him.

Okay, so the only thing Ye Chong needed to do would be to find something that could burn and emit a great amount of heat. His eyes, of course, went upon the mildstone sitting at the corner. The mildstone was clearly the solution because of its immense amount of energy contained, the tricky part was, how would Ye Chong bring out the energy? How would he initiate the reaction?

If I were to find a way to trigger the stone, then...

Ye Chong who held a complete systematic knowledge of the

basics recognized the core of every reaction, every equation, laid within Energy itself. The breakthrough would only happen if the solution for the issue of energy activation had been discovered.

Okay, I know where the problem is. Then I should be finding ways to solve it.

And that was when Sang Fan observed his first Frankenstein in the village. Ye Chong spent all day and night in his own research room and had never left the doorstep ever since. The chief sometimes would pay him a visit to check out his progress but he always was treated with ignorance without fail, as the science maniac was too indulged in his experiment. Sang Fan held tremendous respect towards this very young yet talented teacher despite the treatment. Even though the teacher kept muttering denial towards his position as a teacher, he inevitably had already become a teacher in the Sang Fan's mind.

Sang Fan was highly impressed by the vast knowledge and that tenacious curiosity in experimentation of his.

Sang Fan had been checking out those microchips circulated among the villagers for so long, yet he had comprehended so little. His understanding gained over the years was nothing compared to those few words coming from this young teacher.

Ye Chong had removed the processor from the engineering model and lifted it all the way to his room to perform his research. The processor was an impeccable aid to his research as Ye Chong noticed he was making significant progress. The slight disappointment was, despite all that, he had yet to discover the key factor to activate the energy stored within mildstone.

Sighhhh...

Ye Chong took a gaze at the last few samples sitting at the corner. Impatience was heating his breath, knowing the likelihood of the fate of these remaining samples. Only these samples had yet interacted with Lavagold. Assuming they also showed a null

reaction as an outcome, the research could be in a stern dead-end. His tired eyes glanced upon Sang Fan who was looking at the processor and silently he left the room. Meanwhile, Sang Fan was exerting strong interests towards the processor ever since the first eye-contact he made with it. Ye Chong had spent two hours to guide him on the application of the processor. Ye Chong had even inserted a few entries of the elementary to provide a walkthrough for Sang Fan.

The chilly air kissed upon the heated cheeks of Ye Chong. It felt refreshing to be at the outside. Ye Chong, feeling relaxed, was stretching his stiffened muscles.

He could feel his bones fossilized after the days and nights he rooted himself by his desk. The research did not pay off sadly. That was annoying.

Ye Chong had a sudden urge of working out for some reason, and so he began swinging his hands, pulling punches.

The irritation clouding his head seemed to have faded away. His punches got faster and he was literally kicking alive. During the process, he began recalling the moment when he saw the few techniques performed by the villagers. It was a shocker he must admit, as it left deep impression in his mind.

Simple. Straightforward. Sedate.

Ye Chong's body was moving in all sorts of position, there was no pattern to his punches and kicks.

Gradually, his techniques seemed to have changed. It was not obvious but he could feel the changes. It was getting... simplified? And getting more fatal, with more twisting, unpredictable angles. The reflexivity of his body being utilized with the muscle manipulation technique exclusive to the Lan family of September, allowed him to perform some really inhuman performances. The angles of his punches were getting odder.

"Great!" One compliment shot through his ears.

The young man flinched as he withdrew all his moves and stood still. His control over his movements was justified through this, for he was able to pull off and pull out the techniques by his will with immediate effect.

"Shame on me," complimented Sang Pu, with his face filled with amazement. "Never would I have expected sir to have such skills. I actually thought outsiders like sir were those with numb limbs and eyes. But wow, the outside world... much stronger than I thought."

Towards the comment, Ye Chong gave a straight, frozen face. Certainly he would be disgruntled over a senseless, stereotypical comment like this, he was too lazy to have a meaningless debate nevertheless.

Sang Pu was smiling, seemingly had guessed what Ye Chong was feeling, he said, "I guess I must be saying something really senseless to sir's perception. But I got to say, that sir must be a powerful figure in the outside world... yes, with those skills."

Ye Chong had no comment.

A moment of awkward silence lapsed, the Sang man mustered his pride, "Our tribe was already one of the 4 great aristocrats in He Yue galaxy way before our ancestors left the place. I absolutely would love to know what the situation in He Yue is looking like currently. But from what I have known, pilots had already appeared back then, so were the practitioners. The martial arts practitioners were still holding dominant forces in the galaxy in spite of the innovative approaches by the pilots. And yeah, Sang style martial arts were something from the high superior. Hmph, the Archipelago was a hideous place and countless men of our tribes lost their lives when we first came. Imagine all it took just to let us stay..." He pounded his chest in vex.

"Over the past 500 years, our tribe had been fighting with the most fearsome beasts as the routine. If you were the weakling, you

would never survive. As you can see, everyone of us spend our days either by hunting or by all sorts of training, just to further enhance ourselves. And that includes women and children. We know we could never get an actual help from the surrounding, so we need to build our body, hone our skills. With the help of the gravity field, our generation has become much more competent than our ancestors."

Well, Ye Chong had to admit that Sang Pu was making sense in his words. Human beings were the kind whose most potential would be excavated under such environment. The tedious surrounding had provided the Sang villagers the best practical to train themselves. As far as Ye Chong agreed, the practical, the experience of actual combats would forever be the most effective method to improve vitality and skills. A group of collective ideology accumulating their strength and techniques over the centuries, a generation overcoming the other generation, the gradual dethroning of martial arts over the 5 major galaxies, these men in Archipelago now would no doubt be the prime of fighters.

Nevertheless, it was nothing surprising. Ye Chong knew well in his heart, this was a decade of the pilots, for the pilots, by the pilots. The pilots would be the spotlight, the center of concern. Practitioners were potent in fact, but only in a small scope. Look how fragile they would be when they fought an actual mech, as they would get overthrown, rolling down the staircase to their previous throne.

But the last term was very new to his conception. Gravity field? What exactly was that?

"What is gravity field?" asked Ye Chong.

Sang Pu was stunned for a moment, "Hah!" he chuckled. "It's my mistake sir. I had yet introduced this place formally."

And Ye Chong was all ears. It would be his priority to first understand the surrounding well enough, the basics, at the very

least. If it was not the research that haunted him days and nights, he probably would have not forgotten the obvious primary procedure of his space exploration.

"Sir, this piece of land is known as the 'Archipelago'. Back when our ancestors laid their steps here, this very place of our village precisely, they had fully depleted their energy storage, so they could not conduct a proper scouting over the area. But never once we stopped stepping out, as over the time we explored the area, and to our horror, the land was nothing but danger. Not only it was filled with terrifying beasts, but also the fact that under certain condition, at some places, something much more terrifying than the beasts would occur. Gravity field, or strong gravity region some may call it, was one of them, where every region contains different degrees of gravitational forces, they were scattered all over the land like an unforeseeable trap. When you step into one super strong gravity region, you would feel like falling into quicksand, except there would be no way out. And unlike quicksand, a strong gravity region holds no sign, no boundary, no marking with the normal space we live."

And Ye Chong was stupefied towards the introductory chapter of Archipelago, which had utterly flipped over his entire understanding towards the world, the knowledge he had learned. How would that be possible? It was already a miracle to see an actual planet within the asteroid belt, which, contrary to most planets he had seen, was not even a globe technically. He could recognize the difference in planetary shape but would there... at one corner of the galaxy, that a planet this odd exist? Would it be possible to have drastically different degrees of gravitational force over the planet?

Ye Chong's dropping jaws were priceless to Sang Pu, since it was ultra rare to see the indifferent teacher of his to suddenly get so expressive and it was because of his description on his home, "And after much exploration, we realized there could be signs to help us

distinguish a strong gravity region and non-strong gravity region. For example, the plants inhabited within the gravity field have noticeable difference than the plants in normal field. Everyone in the Sang village could actually determine if the next step they are lifting would be an invisible quicksand. And we are also able to estimate the strength of the gravity before us," said Sang Pu as he smiled proudly.

"200 years ago, one senior of mine found a way to utilize the gravitational force, which is to perform training there. The stronger the gravity, the more burdened the body would be. Given that he no longer gained significant progress on his training in normal field, he would venture into the gravity field. Well of course, we only allow adults to perform their trainings there. Children whose bodies remain mutable are forbidden to enter the area. They would be allowed to head in only when they achieve adulthood."

Well, if what Sang Pu said was true, the place would be wonderful for training. But Ye Chong had a better idea, it would be great if one were to carry out pilot training there as well!

Like... he could try performing a Thomas's Spin with Mach 5 speed under 500% gravity pull, converting the figures, he would get a fancy quick consecutive trio of Thomas's Spin with a speed of Mach 10 instead! The biggest issue of traveling in mech for a pilot would be the burden to their body overtime, while this would be the core to complete all strategic movements and techniques.

Absolutely, Ye Chong was more than excited to check out this very place mentioned by Sang Pu, the gravity bind that strengthened your physique, the double-edged sword namely the strong gravity region...

Chapter 270: Discovery

The Sang family village was surrounded by the mountains, a hideous location for a living one could say, that any man, woman or child would frown upon. The beasts lurking around the corner had been technically wiped out over 500 years under the determined contribution by generations. Ye Chong, under the lead of Sang Pu, arrived by one piece of grassfield just a stone's thrown away from the village.

On the grassfield, an irregularly shaped circle of diameter about a kilometer was formed by the placement of a handful of rocks in different sizes. There were a few young adults carrying out their training there. They appeared to be quite young but the hushes created by the punches and kicks they pulled were not something to be overlooked.

"And sir..." Initiated Sang Pu, pointing at the circle, "This is the strong gravity region I had been telling you about. This encircled area has about 1.3 times the gravity outside. We found it to be perfect for adolescences who had undergone their puberty and possessed a considerable standard of technical achievement. As you can see, these were from the local shrine after completing the training course by their teachers. Once they left the shrine and are declared to be at completion of their course, they would be a warrior, a fighter, or a soldier in the field. And here, it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman, everyone must head to the shrine for combat training. This is what our lives depend on anyway."

Sang Pu was expressing nonchalance in his words, he seemed to be unworried of the issue, although Ye Chong did discern a hint of despair within.

"Sir... your arrival had brought us hope. Your emergence had given all of us hope. I sometimes did envy you and the outsiders, as to you, owning a mech seemed to be something like we did our

gravity field training, but to us, owning a mech, is a legend itself. Hah... we don't really have that much to demand. We only hope for a weapon that could adequately support us through the darkest days..." Sang Pu's voice turned more confident, "Hmph, we are indeed, the strongest tribe here. 500 years had passed, we not only have the bravest warriors, occasionally we also have the wisest few men. Ironically, nobody had understood what was written on those chips. The wisest few eventually spent their entire life, going by the most mundane method via experiments on all kinds of things they could find around their home. And they had found mildstone, they had discovered plants which could be used as a cure, they learned about bringing us lights in the dark with Hampered Bask, still... they could not find any way of the metallurgy. And likewise to their past counterparts, they died, regretfully."

And that was when Sang Pu set his eyes upon Ye Chong, passionately. The gaze lasted for a moment and the Sang burst out laughing, "What am I doing?? I'm just showing you the gravity field, why in the Archipelago I told you these? Mhm, it's alright, these aren't really much related to you, it's just the fate of our tribe. An unchangeable fate."

Ye Chong remained in silence. He was actually at loss of words, the proper words to tell.

"Well!" Bucked up Sang Pu, "Take a careful look at the region."

As requested, Ye Chong took a closer look at the gravity region, which frankly speaking, nothing particularly odd could be perceived, as Ye Chong took a second look and was bewildered by the lack of difference. If it was not that visible structure by the stones, he would not even have his attention on this ordinary piece of land, nor would he ever think that this piece of land turned out to be the strange gravity region the Sang had been talking about.

Ye Chong, looked at Sang Pu with confusion, shaking his head, "Nothing strange?"

"And so we thought back then," smiled Sang Pu. "Strong gravity region was a place of fatality but well, we still discovered it anyway. As mentioned before, take a look at the grasses. Of what difference they had with the grasses outside?"

Ye Chong shifted his attention over the grasses. A moment lapsed and he did observe something different. The grasses within the circle were much shorter than the grasses outside. A run in his schemata and he got it right away.

Sang Pu saw Ye Chong's expression and knew that his teacher had gotten it, the explanation went on however, "Due to the additional gravitation, the plants within the circle would have a certain degree of differences with their outside counterparts. The greater the difference between the gravitation of both sides, the more noticeable the plants between the boundary would look. This region for example, its forces were stronger than the outside, which caused the shorter height of grasses."

"What if there were no plants in the field?" hurriedly Ye Chong asked.

"You let the stone guide you," answered Sang Pu, with impression in his eyes.

And Ye Chong got it. Provided that there was a strong gravity region ahead, the tossed stone would fall with an unnatural curve. Well, that was rather a clever move, simple and practical, without needing the aid of an advanced machine. You only need one piece of rock you could find anywhere. Ye Chong could almost imagine that high and wild the rock would fly when it got tossed by the powerfully built villagers. The foreign zone might have a different level of gravity, but that should not hinder the overall velocity of the rock during the travel.

Such creativity, such genius! Exclaimed Ye Chong in his mind.

The few steps right before the circle were nothing much, the next step into the circle was... lumpy... one could say, as Ye Chong felt

himself being pulled into the ground, his body was heavier, like tied with boulders over his limbs. Sang Pu in the meantime, was walking as normal.

The few young adults addressed Sang Pu respectfully upon seeing his arrival. Sang Pu returned with a smile and a tap at one of their shoulders, few compliments and words of encouragement were given then he led Ye Chong to one corner.

Ye Chong tried swinging his limbs. It literally felt like he was in an invisible bondage or something... Man, imagine the warriors who had undergone training like this, the body must be greater than the sun. Ye Chong could imagine the fact that Black Covers would inevitably lose if they were to have a fight with the warriors here, without the mech of course. They would be snapped to death in seconds.

He took a stroll around and realized that there was indeed not much of a difference other than the additional weight posed onto his body.

Within the gravity region, other than the purplish grasses that covered the area, there were a few tiny sprouts tinting the area. From a botanist's aspect, Ye Chong hypothesized these being a kind of fungi. The umbrella like structure on top was thick and was adorned with few white spots. Its grayish appearance was easily overlooked, but its size was a savior for it was humongous. Most of the umbrellas were about a diameter of a meter, the stem was extra thick, very contented kind of texture.

Ye Chong realized he had not seen fungi like this in his room before. As the curiosity of a chemist rang in his head, he asked, "What is this called?" His eyes watched the fungi carefully as he went to have a closer look.

"Portabella," concisely Sang Pu responded. "We called it 'Portabella', it might look soft but it's actually very hard, that it felt like you are biting on a piece of leather. It is not edible. Mostly

it grows within the gravity region, very reproductive, but they only grow in trios. So you won't see a mushrooming flock of them on the field. We have yet discovered what it could do..."

Ye Chong gave a touch. It did feel really hard. The fleshy appearance was a lie.

His pupils enlarged as he lowered his back and dug that very piece of soil with caution. He gave a stare, and another, his heart raced as his mind went wild.

Could it be...

Wait no. He still needed to confirm his wild belief. Ye Chong sprang from the ground, straightened his back, "Sir? What's... wrong?" asked Sang Pu, as his sharp eyes discerned that unusual expression of Ye Chong.

Ye Chong did not reply. His eyes scurried around. And at the one other corner within the circle nearby, there were other trio of Portabella resting.

A tip to his toes, Ye Chong flung and launched himself like an eagle to the mushrooms. Sang Pu also reacted promptly as he followed his teacher's steps upon understanding what that gaze from his teacher meant.

Sang Pu acted like an explosive beast. It was a simple dash behind his teacher, yet it was speedy, with an indescribable grace.

Ye Chong jumped before the Portabellas and stomped to the ground, lowering himself as he searched through the gaps below.

I knew it! Ye Chong was breathing heavily, to extinguish that bit of flaring excitement, as he picked up that tiny speck of silver particles on interior of Portabella.

The particles were of sizes of green peas, with a dull surface, mixed within the soils. Nobody would have ever noticed their existence without proper observation.

"What are these?" Sang Pu asked, as he looked at the strange specks in Ye Chong's hand.

"This, is what we outsiders called, metal," glanced Ye Chong, he slowly spoke.

Sang Pu was as if struck by lightning, his widened eyes gazed upon the particles. So these are metals of the myths, longed by the Sang? Sang Pu shuddered to his realization.

Sang Pu only regained his calmness after a while. His shaking hand took one particle from Ye Chong and exerted his little bit of force, the particle flattened in his grip. His hope sank, the passion went extinguished, "What's the use of metals this soft?"

Ye Chong gave a kick to the Portabella, beside the thumping mushroom, "What's useful is this."

Ye Chong realized how he had been taking the wrong approach the whole time. He had been thinking of how to extract the Lavagold itself from the ore by exerting extremely amount of heat at once. So he had been desperately searching for a factor to trigger the high density of heat within mildstone to perform extraction.

That, was the approach of a metallurgy researcher. But he forgot the fact that he was also an alchemist.

There were already a series of tutorial of alchemy illustrating methods to obtain metals from the ore itself. However, metallic extraction was a much more simplified and convenient methodology, it had gone so common that Ye Chong already forgot the fact that an alchemist approach had ever existed.

Not till the moment he saw metallic particles underneath Portabella, he did not realize such a forgotten fact.

If Lunatic Guan was beside him, he probably would have been smacked on his head. Thought Ye Chong, as he smiled in wry. I had learned so much yet I only remembered this little, I hardly had anything that could be identified as a master of it.... Even my

martial arts expertise became nothing after I came to Sang family village.

The root of Portabella was so deep into the earth that, it felt like a carrot from the fairytale when both Ye Chong and Sang Pu tried pulling it out.

The remaining young adults stumbled upon the sight, it was certainly astonishing to see both grown men pulling and ravaging a poor stem of mushroom which refused to succumb to their violence and abuse. It stood firmly on the ground. "Hnnnnnnng!" Both men were pounding each other, pulling a giant fungus off the ground. The scene was weird, really weird.

The fluttering spores stuck on their bodies, their faces were looking dusty and sweaty.

On the way back to the village, all villagers were grinning upon seeing Sang Pu. The face was beyond their understanding and no way they could look at it with a straight face, including the ladies who were covering their faces, snickering.

His face was covered with some unknown dirt while he was shouldering stem of an unknown plant. It would have not been so impulsive if the person was an ordinary villager. But it was Sang Pu, the candidate for the next village chief, a prestigious figure, the leader of the younger generation. That respect exerted by he himself, through that unchangeable calmness of his, now all eradicated by a stem of mushroom.

Sang Pu was blushing red as the flame, though his expression was grim. At least the blushes were covered by the spores, so nobody really saw how the next chief was feeling embarrassed.

Ye Chong in the meantime was tailing him, his indifference remained, unlike the poor chief.

Chapter 271: The Cycle of Lavagold

Ye Chong was holding a piece of Lavagold plate in his hand. It glowed brilliantly, with ripples of curves over the surface. Imagine the craze that could happen if this piece of Lavagold ever rolled into one market of the 5 major galaxies! Exclaimed Ye Chong in his mind. It was reasonable as a piece of rare mineral would be far more precious than a piece of jewel. So, pieces like the Teardrop, the Do-Kun stone would be obviously something of the other world, with a heavenly price if one were to describe it.

The assistants around were expressing their overwhelmed excitement, as their eyes seemed to have been bewitched by the beauty of the Lavagold, they were intoxicated. And their eyes, when towards Ye Chong, were showing their highest regards and deepest respect.

Yes, you heard it right. There was more than one assistant, as the crew of Ye Chong had expanded from one single man called Sang Fan to a team of 5 members, whom the chief of the village selected from the young generation and all of them were intelligent and adaptive. Certainly Ye Chong knew the intention of the chief - he wanted more men of his to learn, whether they would learn a little bit or none, from this talented teacher of the outside world. Ye Chong would not reject this, considering having more assistants would do him no actual harm.

The 5 men of his team, despite having a rather weak foundation in their studies, possessed a one-of-a-kind diligence. They were the potential, a clay to be sculptured. Yes, one could agree that there would always be a difference in how talented a person would be compared to others, but that did not mean the innate talent could replace acquiring diligence. Though it did not mean Ye Chong would be motivated enough to teach them from the very first page of his textbook, he did not have the interest for that. Glad that Sang Fan was there to do the talking for him.

While they were progressing incredibly slow on metallurgy, they were learning fairly quick on alchemy, it felt somehow as if they were made for alchemy, which was shocking to Ye Chong. So Sang Fan explained, on one occasion when Ye Chong asked, that everyone here was very much exposed to the norm of distinguishing plants. And yes, the Guan's approach of alchemy was a product of the ancient botanical knowledge, and most of Ye Chong's alchemical processes were chiefly related to plants, so no doubt the men were progressing quickly.

And we did it!

Phew...

Ye Chong gave a sigh of relief. Although he had probably been completely isolated from the modernity while being stuck without the tools to perform even the most fundamental process of mineral extraction, he made it anyway, as he extracted the fluid from Portabella and produced a reagent with it to extract the Lavagold from the ore instead. The joy faded away quickly however, as he calmed down, remembering the fact that... he was in a race of time, where Mu Shang would never be able to last for him in all eternity.

I wonder... if Mu Shang were doing fine... Thought Ye Chong, his mind sinking into a fact that seemed to be changing history anytime.

He bucked up and spoke to Sang Fan, "Bring the chief here."

Sang Fan responded agreeably as he set off sprinting excitedly.

The piece of Lavagold flowed from one assistant to another, and every one of them was more than enthralled to see their breakthrough.

Ye Chong was pondering at the side. Yes, they did extract Lavagold successfully but it remained as a problem if they could massively extract and produce these golds. He did inquire Sang Fan

on Portabella, the Sang's response was... Portabella was a common fungi indeed but not common enough in numbers, as it only grew within the gravity region. Assuming they had to go with the Lavagold option, the supply of Portabella would be an issue.

Noises poured from the outside suddenly, as a group of people flooded into the place, with the leading one, of course, the chief himself, while Sang Pu and Sang Ling tailed right behind.

"Did you get it sir?" Sang Pu could no longer hold his excitement, his voice was shaking, Sang Ling was also expressing that mesmerization towards Ye Chong.

"Mhm," nodded Ye Chong as he turned his head to the few assistants. And Sang De the really old shifted his sight along with Ye Chong's head and landed upon that piece of glittering precious resting in one of the assistant's hands. The old man's eyes sure were large, as his breathing intensified. The assistant went to the chief and passed him the Lavagold with both hands solemnly.

Loud gasps were heard in the room, along with few waves of whispers.

The old chief reached his trembling hands over that piece of beauty. His hands were so shaky that Ye Chong was worried if the chief, at this rate, would have funeral a week from today.

He had to admit that, the Lavagold was truly a beauty to behold, even for someone who had seen countless jewels and mineralites like Ye Chong, as he could imagine himself bowing before this piece of gorgeous. So it would not be far-fetched to see one man isolated from the world like Sang De the chief dramatically reacting towards Lavagold. But well, Ye Chong was more concerned about its functionality rather than its beauty. Lavagold was limited in number within the 5 major galaxies, and so were the researches about it, even the information in Mu's databank only contained a very vaguely described entry on it. Ye Chong did test out its functionality, briefly, of course. It could never be precisely

accurate, but he believed in the excellence of this piece that it would surpass the alloys containing Black Gold.

Ye Chong learned a lot from the extraction process using alchemy's approach this time. Lots of stuffs regarding alchemy suddenly made very much sense to him ever since.

"Sir..." Spoke Sang Ling, "Why does the metal look... a little different than the color of the mechs in shrine?"

"Why must the metal have the same colors as the mech from shrine?" asked Ye Chong, bewildered.

"Because... weren't mechs from the Sanctuary made out of metals too?" The villagers could see Ye Chong slamming himself towards the ground.

Pure ignorance! Oh my Fal galaxy... Ye Chong looked at the breasts of Sang Ling. And one word, an odd terminology from Shang returned to his mind... what was it again? Dumb blonde? Wait, that was discriminative Shang said... Oh. Bimbo. Yeah. I guess it fits her."Brainless with great peaks!" Shang once said, hmmm... wow, first time a word from Shang that made logical sense, Shang actually wasn't talking meaningless crap the whole time...

And out of sudden... he missed the artificial indulgence.

The inappropriate gaze of Ye Chong was sending blushes over her face.

"Well..." And Ye Chong whispered his explanation, "This metal is known as the 'Lavagold'. The mech inside the shrine uses a metal known as the 'Tritanium', an alloy." The team of assistants, including Sang Fan, all took out a handy notebook from their pocket and jotted down the lesson of the day. And everybody else was stupefied by their synchronicity.

"So sir, what exactly is Tritanium? Which one is better? Lavagold or Tritanium?" asked Sang Fan courteously, while the other

assistants were listening.

"Find it out yourself. The processor is there." Ye Chong was too lazy to elaborate, "For your information, Tritanium had been a goner since 300 years ago."

The diligence of the 5 young men was a satisfying sight to the chief, he spoke, "All of you shall learn something from your teacher. He is a very talented teacher and every word of his could count, learn even the tiniest bit of it and you would live with it for the rest of your life."

"Yes chief!"

"Yes!" The group hurriedly showed their approval. The little instance resolved that awkward situation of Sang Ling just now.

Sang Pu received the Lavagold from the chief and exerted brute force on it. The piece did not change at all! Not even a mark of his fingerprint! "Great!" Exclaimed Sang Pu and the whispers brewed again among the villagers as they stretched their neck, desperately trying to have a better look at that piece of precious.

"Sir, would it be possible..." Sang Pu's eyes were passionate, "for sir to turn this into a weapon?" The very question got everybody else as they held their respiration simultaneously, the hustle and bustled settled out of the blue.

Right, making a weapon had always been the primary concern of every Sang.

"Well..."

The eyes enlarged, the inhalation was intense.

"It's very likely."

And everyone was hurraing for the talent.

The old chief was delighted, very delighted, as his voice shook, "G-great... whatever sir did, shall never be forgotten among our tribe. All of us, from one generation to another, shall never

disregard the bestow sir made!"

Ye Chong was not taking that compliment happily, since obviously that piece of Lavagold would hardly do something if it was never possible to be massively produced in the first place.

"Hmmm..." Ye Chong spoke to the chief, "I did not expect the supply of Lavagold could be this rich, but I would need more Portabella mushrooms if I were to produce weapons."

"Porta...bella?" asked the chief, certainly he did not get it.

"Yes, Portabella," nodded Ye Chong, "Its fluid would be the main material to extract Lavagold from its ore. But as far as I know, the amount of Portabella was not motivating here."

"Hmmm..." The chief pondered, "Now that is some problem."

"C-chief!" One hoarse voice rang from the crowd, "It's not a problem!" A shriveled looking elderly walked to the front, the strands of beard were giving him some unfriendliness...

Ye Chong's stare was strange so the chief quickly made an introduction, "This is our healer, Sang Ru Bei, also the most knowledgeable man regarding plants."

That pair of little eyes of Sang Ru Bing shone, "I had researched on Portabella mushrooms for some time. They do grow solely within the strong gravity boundary, but cultivating it would not be challenging. We could take a few gravity region as a cultivation for Portabella."

"Fair enough! I'll have you do lead the job! You could take anyone in the village for you. Just make sure the Portabellas are coming!" the chief decisively stated.

"Yes chief," replied Sang Ru Bei politely.

"Sir..." asked the chief, "I wonder would it be possible to make one weapon with the Lavagold now...?"

Ye Chong hesitated a moment... "Hmm, this piece of Lavagold is a

bit too small to make a full metallic weapon. I could make it into a few blades for your spear, just tie it on the bitterwoods."

"As you have suggested," responded the chief.

"Now..." Ye Chong turned to his assistants, "Reagent No.1 and No.3, Powdered Emerald and Powdered Zinc."

The assistants began moving. Swiftly they brought the reagents and powdered minerals to their teacher. Although they had yet mastered much on the theoretical part, they had much practical.

Sang Fan quickly placed every utensil on the table for Ye Chong.

The teacher would be actually producing something live! Everyone was interested and nobody was willing to leave, their necks extended, their eyes were glued upon the hands of the master, as they feared missing one moment of the show. They held the breath carefully, fearing their pointless breathing would disrupt the teacher's production.

Blurp... Blurp...

Ye Chong placed the Lavagold into a container and poured the reagents one at a time. Very soon after the solid gold melted into a splash of glittering yellow. It did not mix with the reagent however, it just reacted towards it. It felt like magic in the eyes of the villagers, even though it was merely another day of being an alchemist for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong discarded the reagents, leaving the liquid of Lavagold in the container. He then sprinkled Powdered Emerald thoroughly over the surface, which turned the liquid into a gluey texture, fluffy and tangible. It was another beauty... an adorable beauty... thought Sang Ling as she saw the gold dancing like cotton candy in Ye Chong's hands.

Women could say no to cutesy things.

The other villagers were so amazed that they did not even blink their eyes.

Ye Chong's expression remained unchanged, as he mumbled, "Mold," after 30 seconds.

Sang Fan passed the mold to Ye Chong immediately.

He took the mold and sprinkled the interior with Powdered Zinc, while his other hand lifted a piece of polished wood chip and sliced one piece of Lavagold jelly. He then took a pair of pliers, made out of wood of course, picked the jelly and stuffed it into the mold. A firm press was given and any portion beyond the mold was sliced off by the chip.

3 minutes passed, Ye Chong lifted the mold and gently tilted it over the table.

Klink! A blade fell out of the mold, giving a clear sound on the table. Ye Chong took the blade and wiped the zinc off the surface. The blade was glowing in Lava Gold.

"Done. Now, just give a nice polish on the blade itself."

The villagers were staring at the Lavagold spearhead, blatantly overjoyed but they behaved themselves when they turned their head over Ye Chong, blatantly respectful.

Humans... were always the frightened kind in front of the unknown.

"So..." Ye Chong looked at the remaining jellies, "Have a try too," he said to his assistants, asking them to be a part of the cycle of Lavagold, from solid to liquid, liquid to solid.

Chapter 272: An Anxious Heart

Work was progressing fast. Sang Fan and others quickly got proficient at their tasks. Using alchemy to build metal weapons was easy, requiring little effort from the weapon smiths themselves. With Ye Chong's permission, Sang Fan and the team pushed strongly for the other villagers to join in. Now, almost everyone had the skills required.

Cultivation of the gray mushrooms was also going smoothly. Sang Rubei had studied plants for years, and quickly identified the optimal cultivation conditions. They had even found a few areas with suitable strength of gravitational force to cultivate the mushrooms.

The Sang Family Village gave their all in these revolutionary changes. With the exception of the hunting troop, all other young men were sent to mine lavagold ores, while the women learned to cultivate gray mushrooms from Sang Rubei.

The hunting troop were all equipped with new pikes. Lavagold heads were fastened to the bitterwood shafts. The sharpened and polished lavagold head gleamed with a beautiful and deadly luster, envied by the rest of the villagers. However, the thought of having one for each of them soon encouraged them to work much harder. A warrior's love for weapons was like a playboy's love for beautiful women.

The first the new pike tips were used, the hunters returned with glorious fruits of labor. Their first catch was thrice the number of usual hunts. Old Sang De was all smiles looking at the huge pile of dead prey. This proved the incontrovertible power of metal weapons. All the villagers treated Ye Chong with the utmost respect. This was a respect born out of the hope that he had given to them. To receive advice from the man was the dream of every member of the younger generation.

Hence, when Ye Chong asked the village head for more helpers, all the young people except for Sang Ling came to Sang De to volunteer. Even Sang Pu could not help but try it himself, but was lectured by Old Sang De instead.

In the end, Old Sang De chose 10 people, all aged between 13 and 14 years old. These young people were more malleable and receptive to new ideas.

Ye Chong needed help for his current project. He had left the metal weapon forging work to Sang Fan. Now, he was focused on his new research - the mildstone.

It was a race against time. His objective was to save Mu, Shang and the rest. Everything else was meaningless without achieving this.

This d*mned mildstone! Ye Chong still could not figure out how to harvest its potential energy. This was the biggest obstacle for Ye Chong now. Without energy, he could do nothing. Ye Chong knew that the metal weapons would improve the lives of the Shang Family villagers, but they would not help with rescuing Mu, Shang and the rest.

Ye Chong was now considering the idea of using alchemy to harvest the energy within the mildstone.

After all this while, Ye Chong was more knowledgeable in alchemy. He was beginning to learn to think from an alchemist's point of view.

This research was never done before. In the chip left by Lunatic Guan, Ye Chong could find nothing on this mineral. However, reality forced Ye Chong to deal with it head on. He must try everything he could think of.

Ye Chong never liked to express his emotions. In fact, he had done so but Mu, Shang had never discussed about this. He never imagined that Mu and Shang would be separated from him. It

came to be that Mu and Shang had become an integral part of his life. When he was first separated from them, he was struck with moments of loss and helplessness, but he quickly found another reason to strive besides surviving - rescuing Mu and Shang.

All this while, Mu and Shang took the role of protectors, while Ye Chong had never done anything for them. Now, they were stuck in the Red Sea, their fates unclear. Ye Chong must rescue them, but not out of so-called gratefulness. It was simply what he had to do.

Alchemy required knowing the material's properties. This was the most basic principle for every field. Alchemy used plants, but all the plants here were new to Ye Chong. He knew less of the plants here than the children of the Sang Family Village, but unlike them, he was also equipped with the skills of a scientist.

To know more about the plants would require continuous experimentation. Usually, Ye Chong would do it all by himself. It would take time, but that way he would understand even more about the plants.

Now, however, Ye Chong lacked time.

Hence, he needed helpers. The villagers here were all very familiar with the native plants, and most suitable for the role. With them, Ye Chong need only explain the experimental procedures, and leave the execution and documentation of results to them. This way, he could speed up the research significantly. Even Sang Fan was called to join in this research project.

No one doubted Ye Chong's research. In fact, they all came, full of reverence, to the laboratory that seemed so sacred to them, even though to Ye Chong, the lab was badly under-equipped and primitive.

They were instilled with knowledge of all kinds of plants from a young age. This was knowledge accumulated over time from the previous generations, sometimes at the cost of their lives. Their understanding allowed them to learn alchemy more easily and

quickly, as they picked up the skills for laboratory work. Hence, Ye Chong gave them full control of their own experiments on various plants, only asking that they record all experiment procedures and results. As for Ye Chong, he had to analyze all these results, aside from running his own experiments.

Ye Chong was now slowly getting used to the environment of strong gravity. Even in this hectic situation, Ye Chong did not forget to train himself. Everyone here was a warrior, and Ye Chong did not lack sparring partners. Ye Chong learned quickly, impressing his sparring partners. They all admired how smart he was, to pick up even combat skills so quickly.

Even Ye Chong was surprised at his own improvement. Ye Chong's physical strength had long reached a bottleneck, and the occasional improvements were only in small leaps. Ye Chong had repeatedly thought that he had reached the limits of the human body. Now, however, with the strong gravity environment, he found that his body was also strengthening quickly to keep up. He was finally breaking through this bottleneck. It happened so fast that sometimes Ye Chong would feel imbalanced in his own body. This was why, despite the urgency of his objective, he was still determined to train himself.

As for Ye Chong's helpers, they were all busy, all the time. Ye Chong was almost embarrassed with himself, watching them so focused in their work. There was finally hope for this centuries-old tribe. The sudden burst of energy they showed had surprised Ye Chong

His research progressed quickly. With Sang Rubei in the team, they advanced leaps and bounds. This made Ye Chong realized something - an expert was more useful than a bunch of newbies.

Every day, Ye Chong analyzed the research results, and keyed them into the photon processor in a new database.

Time passed by, but Ye Chong had not found a way to harvest

energy from the mildstone. He was growing more anxious by the day, but was helpless at the same time.

In the strong gravity region, Ye Chong trained intensively. The days passed, and he felt more and more pressured. If it were anyone else, he would not be so affected. However, this was Mu and Shang. He was greatly troubled.

As he trained, he grew stronger and stronger. Ye Chong was now a formidable fighter, even for Sang Pu.

Ye Chong swung and kicked faster and faster. He was anxious deep inside, and could not help but let out a long howl. His voice echoed throughout the lands. The usually crowded strong gravity region was empty, since the villagers had all gone to mine lavagold.

It had been three months since he was separated from Mu and Shang. Harvesting the mildstone's energy, building a skeleton-made flying transport, and teaching the Sang Family villagers to fly them all seemed to be so far away. He thought of Coxcomb, Mu and Shang, trapped in the Red Sea, and felt renewed anxiety.

Everything in the strong gravity region became his victims. Ye Chong punched and kicked, and everything hit crumbled easily. Even the ground, tough as steel, dented in many places.

Before entering Archipelago, Ye Chong could punch through alloy doors with his bare hands. Now, he was stronger than the average Sang Family villager. However, Ye Chong did not feel like he had attained Jie. Lan Yixing's chip had informed him that when a combat expert reached a certain level of skills, he would experienced a bottleneck. Some would never break through this bottleneck, but the ones who did will attain Jie.

Jie experts were the most formidable. They were more knowledgeable in combat techniques than any ordinary combat expert, but most importantly, they had extra extraordinary abilities.

Lan Yixing, for example, was able to control his muscles to a mind bending extent when he attained Jie. These were biologically impossible feats. Besides, his senses were greatly heightened.

All these special features in Jie experts were absent in Ye Chong right now. Ye Chong believed that he must be even stronger than Lan Yixing now, but he still had not attained Jie. However, the chip had said that only a Jie expert can defeat another Jie expert.

"It looks like I'm a weirdo, after all," Ye Chong thought wryly to himself. Fortunately, he did not mind about attaining Jie or not. To him, strength was his priority. If he could defeat a Jie expert, then it did not matter if he was not a Jie expert anyway.

The Sang Family's battle techniques had influenced Ye Chong a lot. Now, Ye Chong's combat style had changed drastically. He had combined the essences of combat from the September Lan family, Black Cove and the Sang family, such that his techniques could be considered an entirely different style altogether.

Bare handed combat was not that important to Ye Chong, not like mech combat. However, he still could not find an energy replacement so far. Ye Chong dared not withdraw Han Jia to train, since the remaining energy must be conserved in cases of emergency.

After venting out his frustration, Ye Chong felt a lot better. He was about to return to his laboratory when he saw someone running to him. Ye Chong squinted, and saw that it was Sang Pu.

Sang Pu was quick. He was by the boundary of the strong gravity region in the blink of an eye, and easily crossed the boundary without stopping.

Seeing Sang Pu in a rush, Ye Chong guessed that he must be here for him.

As expected, when Sang Pu saw Ye Chong, he began urgently, "Sir, please come quick."

Chapter 273: Nonlinear Cobalite

Ye Chong followed Sang Pu to the lavagold mining site. The mining site was crowded, all of them strong, young men. Ye Chong imagined that almost all of the much stronger villagers must have been dispatched here. Beside the mining site was a small hill of lavagold ore, still covered in mud and not yet transported into the village.

The mining site was now a secured site for the Sang Family Village. To prevent wild animal attacks, almost all the villagers were sent here to sweep the area. A security ring was also formed around the perimeter of the mining site, showing just how much the villagers cared about this mining site.

"Sir, this way please." Sang Pu led Ye Chong to one of the dugout holes of the lavagold mining site.

This mining site was now much larger and deeper than when Ye Chong first inspected the area. He could smell the wet earth, hear the metallic clangs from the mining work further away. The villagers did not stop working because of his arrival. They were using very primitive tools, mostly made of everthorn wood. While everthorn was not as resilient as bitterwood, it was much tougher and, considering the lack of other metal instruments, a good choice of material.

Ye Chong approached the mining dugout, and the village miners quickly made way for him.

The dugout was quite deep, and at the bottom was smoke-gray soil. This was odd. Ye Chong remembered clearly that the soil was brown when they first started mining. He had never seen gray soil like this before, and it was quite strange.

Ye Chong said nothing as he leaped straight into the dugout.

He bent down and dug up a handful of the gray soil. It felt heavy

and tightly packed.

"We came up to this layer of gray earth today. The layer is too hard. We only managed to dig slightly deeper after a whole afternoon, so I thought you should see it, sir." Sang Pu explained. Ye Chong did not expect there to be such a layer of hard gray soil deep under, mixed in with the lavahold ore. The gray layer was extremely hard. Metal instruments might make work easier, but the villagers only had everthorn wood instruments, which made progress harder and much slower. Besides, the everthorn instruments were already quite worn out, slowing their progress even further.

Ye Chong did not seem to hear Sang Pu, his eyes staring straight at the soil beneath. Ye Chong almost choked himself! He did not hear a word from Sang Pu, his eyes completely focused on the thumb-sized gray crystals mixed together with the gray soil.

He carefully picked out one of the gray crystals and put it on his palm, studying it closely.

It was nonlinear cobalite! He recognized it immediately, and was positively overjoyed by the discovery. This was one of the materials he had been searching for. Nonlinear cobalite was an important material to harvest energy from teardrop mineralite. With this mineral, the teardrop mineralite would be more than just a decoration. A teardrop mineralite powered mech or warship was truly terrifying - that was the conclusion that Ye Chong, Mu and Shang had arrived at after detailed calculations!

However, Ye Chong's mood quickly dampened. While he was indeed searching for nonlinear cobalite, this was not what he needed the most right now. Ye Chong smiled wryly as he casually picked out a few of them. He had only three teardrop mineralites; they would not need so much nonlinear cobalite. Just as he was about to leave, Ye Chong suddenly had an epiphany.

Abruptly, Ye Chong stood up, his eyes widened.

He pulled Sang Pu to him and gave a few instructions before running back to the village. Sang Pu was worried that Ye Chong might come across any danger, and so ordered a few men to follow him back.

Sang Pu watched helplessly at Ye Chong's quickly disappearing figure. The problem before him was still unsolved. It seemed that it was up to him in the end.

Ye Chong ran like the wind, and finally arrived at his laboratory. The helpers stared at his rushed entrance. To them, the man was always calm and collected, to an eerie degree. Many times they wondered if he would have any other expression on his face.

Ye Chong ignored them and went straight to his workbench.

Night fell.

Sang Fan was the second last person to leave the lab, leaving Ye Chong alone. As he left, he quietly closed the laboratory door behind him with deference. Ye Chong was completely engrossed in his experiment, and did not notice Sang Fan's exit.

As he stepped outside the lab, Sang Fan finally felt fatigue overtaking him. The intense work every day left him sleepy by the end of the day. It was dark outside, and aside from the patrols, everyone in the village had slept. During the day, everyone worked long and hard. All the villagers knew that the Sang family was undergoing a transformation, one they had waited for centuries. There was no need for further motivation. Everyone did their part earnestly.

A breeze swept by. The Sang Family Village was like a youth, full of hope for the future as it fell silent at night. Sang Fan finally reached home, and went to bed straight away.

Boom!

There was a loud explosion. The violent explosion woke up the entire village. People began to run towards the explosion site. They

were the village's elites, and responded the fastest, running out without even taking off their sleeping gowns. Soon, the entire Sang Family Village came alive, as the villagers lighted up their homes.

All the villagers were shocked. They had never heard such a loud sound before. With their primitive ways, there was never an explosion to begin with. However, none of the villagers showed fear.

Soon, they found the source of the explosion. It was Ye Chong's laboratory!

The villagers got worried. The man was very important to them, the only hope for their future.

Thick, white smoke was coming from the laboratory. The smoke was so thick, it looked solid. Was the lab on fire? Old Sang De was startled. He ran towards the lab, ahead of everyone else despite his age, and shouted, "Pu, put out the fire!"

Sang Pu acknowledged, his expression unchanged, but his eyes betrayed his emotions. He waved, and the villagers around him began to fetch water containers.

Before he reached the lab, Old Sang De ordered, "Cheng, go have a look."

A dark and athletic man beside Old Sang De acknowledged, and made to run into the smoke.

Just then, out came a man from the white smoke. It was night time, but all the villagers knew it was Ye Chong.

Seeing Ye Chong unharmed, Old Sang De was overjoyed. "You alright, sir?"

Ye Chong waved slightly and said, "I'm fine." He was a sorry figure, his clothing covered with holes, with some places burnt into crisps. His hair was all ruffled like a bird's nest, and his face was covered with soot.

The villagers were curious. Just what experiment was he up to, to lead to such a violent ending?

Ye Chong may look pitiful, but his eyes were shining with a rare glint of joy.

He had a breakthrough! He had finally found the solution! He could now harvest the energy from the mildstone. The discovery of the nonlinear cobalite had urged him to consider, if the mineral could be used to harvest energy from teardrop mineralite, could it also be used for the mildstone?

Ye Chong had returned to the lab and began experimenting immediately. His suspicion proved to be true! He had finally found the key to the mildstone problem, but the explosion had occurred since he could not control the energy release well. Fortunately, Ye Chong reacted in that split second and avoided the explosion. Even so, he was still completely covered in soot.

It was only an accident, with no casualties. However, when villagers entered the lab, seeing the mess inside, they found that the solid rock workbench was reduced to rubble, and gasped in surprise! What powerful destruction! Their first impression of this unknown power was mysteriousness and invincibility. They also associated this impression with the man who created this power. Ye Chong could see the villagers looking at him with reverence.

Ye Chong was relieved to find that the photon processor was safely sitting in its corner. This was his most advanced "weapon". Ye Chong's helpers had arrived, and were shocked to see the state of the lab. However, they took a glance at Ye Chong and realized immediately that it was his handiwork, and so began to clean up the lab.

In the coming days, Ye Chong stopped his training routine and worked on the mildstone. Now that he found the key, research progressed smoothly. Sang Fan and others did not know what Ye Chong was doing with the mildstone everyday, but they knew that

the tasks assigned to them were important. They must analyze all the native plants and ores, and record the results in the photon processor to build a complete database. While they did not understand the bigger picture that their tasks were leading towards, they still continued to work earnestly, including the elderly Sang Rubei.

The way Ye Chong was, it would only be weirder if he explained his intentions to them.

Every member of the Sang Family Village were put to use, and the military discipline had raised their efficiency. When Ye Chong was done with the most important experiment and left the lab, he was surprised to find that everyone was already equipped with a metal weapon. They were all jubilant and excited, and the atmosphere was a cheerful one. Not only that, even the tools in the women's hands were made of lavagold.

With the exception of Ye Chong, no one knew what an uproar their primitive and simple lavagold tools would cause if they ever made their way to the Five Galaxies!

Ye Chong's expression did not change, but he was moved inside. All of a sudden, he recalled the times when he dug out some useful treasure out of the trash mountains on the trash planet. Back then, he would be so happy and excited from his findings, but as he learned more and more, these treasures became fewer and fewer. Given that he had seen even the rare minerals like the Do Kun stone and the teardrop mineralite, there were not many things left that he could be excited about.

"Sir, the database is about complete!" Sang Fan came to Ye Chong's side and reported.

Ye Chong was surprised. "So soon?" He had expected the work to be dry and time-consuming.

Sang Fan explained, "Grandpa Bei joined us, so we finished faster than expected." Ye Chong realized then. Sang Fan stood at

attention, hands at his sides, looking like a completely different person. He was now more mature, only his eyes would sometimes betray his once youthful liveliness.

In theory, he had already found a workable solution. The main experiments were completed, and it was time to build the final product. If the engines worked, then he would be able to build flying machines. He would then be one step closer towards saving Mu and Shang.

"How are they doing now?" Ye Chong wondered to himself, and was for a brief moment, lost in thought.

Sang Fan looked strangely at Ye Chong. Melancholy looked odd on the face of a man who was usually cold and expressionless. "Sir must have his own stories to tell," Sang Fan thought to himself. The world outside must definitely be more interesting than here.

"Where can I find wild animals nearby?" Ye Chong asked abruptly.

Sang Fan broke off his thoughts and answered reflexively, "Turn left from the village exit, and go past two hills. There are plenty there."

"Let's go. Lead the way," Ye Chong spoke crisply.

"Oh, alright," Sang Fan answered almost instinctively. He took a step forward, but quickly realized his own confusion. "Why do you want the animals, sir?" He groaned inwardly. Wild animals were always the Sang family's greatest enemy. In the past five centuries, all members of the Sang family had fought against the beasts. Even though they were all equipped with metal weapons now, it was still not enough to give them a definite advantage.

The man might not know of the ferocity of the wild animals on Archipelago, but Sang Fan would, having grown up here himself. He decided to advise the man against meddling with the animals. However, he was not sure if he would succeed. If the man was

determined, then he would have to ask the village head to assign him with guards.

"I need skeletal material," Ye Chong answered succinctly.

"Skeletal material? You mean animal bones?" Sang Fan asked, curious. It was the first time he heard of the bones being referred to this way.

Ye Chong nodded. "Yes."

Sang Fan heaved a sigh of relief, and his expression relaxed. "I see, I know just the place!"

Chapter 274: Destiny Engine, Simplified

Ye Chong followed Sang Fan. They did not leave the village, but headed towards the back instead. Ye Chong had never been here before. His days in the village had been spent on research almost every day, and he had never bothered to study the area. If this was in the past, Ye Chong would see it as a fatal mistake.

Unlike in the Five Galaxies, Ye Chong saw no one idling. All the villagers walked around purposefully.

Sang Fan pointed to a cavern in the mountain ahead and introduced to him, "Right in front is where the bone dumping site is, there's plenty of bones there. Maybe they'll suit your purpose, sir?"

The cavern entrance was not large, probably allowing only two of three mechs to enter side by side. However, for Sang Fan and Ye Chong, it was wide enough.

Once he entered the cavern, Ye Chong stared in shock!

There were mountains of them! Here were truly mountains of skeletons. They reminded Ye Chong of the trash mountains on the trash planet, only now they were mountains of bones.

Sang Fan explained, "The animals we hunted, we eat their meat and take their hide, but the bones are useless. They're too many of them, though, and it's not good to just throw them anywhere we wished, so we chose a place to dump them. Usually, no one comes here, except for the youngsters."

Ye Chong recovered himself by then, and asked, "What for?"

"The bones are strong, and sometimes colorful, making good and lasting ornaments or jewelry. It's been long since people used them to make love tokens, and it has since become tradition. We call them skeleton love tokens. Every young person, man or woman, has to learn how to make them to propose for marriage. The

skeleton love token must be made by hand, or it'll not be convincing." Sang Fan quickly added, "Making skeleton love tokens is tough work, relying only on water to shape the bones. The stronger the skeleton used, the better. We didn't have lavagold before, so we'd use rocks to shape the skeletons. A complicated design could take months, and the chances of success in your first try is very low. So, generally speaking, if you don't really love your partner, you wouldn't even try making this skeleton love token."

As Ye Chong listened to Sang Fan, he could almost hear Shang sighing in his head, "These days, no matter where you are, girls are so hard to get!"

Ye Chong suddenly turned to Sang Fan and asked, "Have you ever tried making one?"

Sang Fan immediately blushed, and answered awkwardly, "Ye - Yes."

Ye Chong was amused by his reaction, and asked again, "For whom?"

Sang Fan blushed into an even darker red, and replied very quietly, "Sang Ling."

Ah, no wonder Sang Ling had looked at him apprehensively that time when Sang Fan was injured. She was probably mad that he did not interfere earlier. They were actually a pair. Ye Chong was no longer as obtuse in these matters as he was before.

However, understanding their relationship did not mean approving her reaction. Everyone had their preferred style of doing things. Given the chance, Ye Chong would not change what he did back then.

Ye Chong looked back at the mountains of skeletons, his eyes that were usually calm as ice were now burning fervently. There was probably no skeleton artisan who could stay looking at so

many skeletons. Ye Chong certainly could not.

What excited him was not the volume, but the quality of these skeletons. Ye Chong had seen plenty of skeletons himself, and he tell just by looking the properties of these skeletons. Here, in the mountains of skeletons, their quality was enough to blow his mind!

Heavens! What was this place? Ye Chong felt like sighing out loud. There was lavagold, then nonlinear cobalite, and other rare ores. Even the skeletons were all top class. It seemed like the Heavens was trying to compensate for the Sang family's suffering by offering these rarities during their long centuries of suffering.

With strong gravity, skeletons of the native animals were denser than normal, and that was why they had excellent quality. Ye Chong realized this some time later.

After selecting a few suitable skeletons, Ye Chong and Sang Fan returned to the laboratory. Sang Fan was vexed. What would the man need skeletons for? Could it be to make a skeleton love token? The thought was rejected immediately. With his cold temperance, how would he? Besides, based on the size of the skeletons, it seemed even more unlikely.

Back in the lab, Ye Chong first built a few odd-looking tools, all made from lavagold.

What he did next left Sang Fan and the rest of his helpers stunned.

Ye Chong used his handmade tools and began to work on the skeletons. The skeletons began to take on different shapes as Ye Chong worked, all looking odd and unusual. The helpers discussed among themselves, trying to guess what he was up to, but to no avail. However, they all agreed on one thing, which was that he was not making any jewelry at all.

Even so, the man's craftsmanship was enough to make them

jealous. The skeletons may look odd after shaping, but they were all intricate and well crafted. They were so interesting that even the village head stopped to have a good look at the incomplete project components when he was visiting. If someone had the master's skills, the skeleton love token he made would definitely ...

The youngsters who had not made their own skeleton love tokens decided then that, when the man was finished with his project, they would ask for him to teach them how to carve skeletons. With this skill, the skeleton love tokens they make would be lovely, and the perfect gift to win the hearts of their love interests. For now, however, they dared not interrupt Ye Chong. They waited, interested and expectant of the project that he was working on.

With Ye Chong himself doing the actual work, his impeccable skills were fully displayed. The young men all watched with great reverence and respect.

Ye Chong finally stopped working. Before him were all the skeletal parts he had made, neatly arranged on the workbench.

The moment everyone was waiting for had finally arrived. Knowing that Ye Chong would complete his project today, even the usually indifferent village head, Old Sang De came to have a look himself. Together with him were Sang Pu, Sang Ling and the others. They all watched Ye Chong quietly from the side.

Ye Chong had gone through the designs at least a dozen times, and he checked the skeleton parts until he was finally satisfied. He breathed in deeply a few times, his expression solemn, and began to put the parts together. He picked up the parts quickly, and assembled them easily and accurately. He moved confidently with a sense of familiarity, as though he had practiced more than a few times, in a stunning rhythm of motion.

Everyone in the lab was surprised to no end. They did not know what Ye Chong was up to, but that did not stop them from

appreciating the significance of this assembling work. Ye Chong's hands moved gracefully like a magician's, the natural flow touching the hearts of his audience. He was like the perfect image of proficiency and accuracy.

Everyone watched Ye Chong's hands as they moved here and there on the workbench. In the silent room, one could only hear the soft clink of skeleton parts being fitted together. No one blinked. They were all curious - what was the flawless final product that would be born from his pair of hands?

Ding! The final part was assembled in place. Ye Chong looked at his work, satisfied. Considering the lack of more precise instruments, he was at least satisfied with this level of work. While he was already aware of it, the toughness of the skeletons still surprised him. He had worn out at least a few lavagold tools.

Unlike Ye Chong, the other people in the room seemed disappointed. That was because the final product looked terrible. It was made up of skeletons in various colors, shaped like a huge egg. With the exception of a few see-through holes, the surface of the egg was dull and uninteresting.

"Sir, what is this?" Sang Fan voiced out the question in everyone's mind.

"Engine," Ye Chong succinctly.

Confusion showed on everyone's face. The term was too unfamiliar to them.

"It's the core of a mech," said Ye Chong.

His audience realized then. All their confusion was thrown out the window, replaced with great respect. To them, mechs had always represented power, a most formidable and mysterious power! One of the helpers who had wanted to touch the engine quickly pulled his hand back.

Could it be, that the man wanted to build a mech? Some of the

smarter ones realized this. If that was the case, then ...

Their faces lit up with uncontained joy.

Ye Chong ignored them, however, deep in his own thoughts. The engine was designed based on the Destiny engine model. It was powered by the mildstone, which he recently had a breakthrough with.

Now, it was time for the final test.

Ye Chong opened a flap, and slipped in a square mildstone that he had shaped earlier into an indentation inside the engine. He closed the flap and pressed on the ignition button. The engine began to hiss on the workbench. The holes in the engine blew a steady airstream. Sang Fan and the rest stared in awe.

The engine was running steadily.

Ye Chong's face was calm as ever, but his hands were gripping tightly - success!

Chapter 275: Sang Family Village - Battle for Survival I

On the hilltop beside the village stood Old Sang De and some other villagers. They did not look as assured as they usually were. Their faces were white as sheets. Even Ye Chong's expression showed a little worry.

Far away, a black horizon seemed to creep closer and closer towards them. They could all see it, clear as day.

It was a stampede of wild animals, heading their way. It was a magnificent view, such that even Ye Chong, who did not lack experience with grand situations, felt slightly chilled inside. The stampede was made up of all kinds of animals. However, they did not seem bothered with each other, running like their lives depended on it, as though something terrifying was coming after them from behind.

Everything seemed tiny compared to this animal stampede. Nothing could stand in its way.

Rumble! Rumble!

The earth shook. The stampede was loud. No one could remain calm against this adversary.

Ye Chong was the first to recover from his initial shock. He turned to the pale village head, Old Sang De and asked, "What's happening?"

Old Sang De did not seem like himself, only muttering incoherently, "How could this be ... How could this be ..."

Everyone was panicking. Ye Chong could only turn back to look at the stampede as he waited for them to calm down. The stampede was still some distance away. Besides, judging from the direction of movement, the animals would probably pass by the plains in front of the Sang Family Village.

As everyone stood around in shock, Ye Chong sat in a corner as he waited for them to calm down in order to find out what was happening. He could see from their looks that they knew what was happening, but were strongly affected by it.

Ye Chong did not panic, nor did he get too excited. He watched calmly like a third party observer. The ground beneath him shook, and the rumbling sound came like thunder from afar. Ye Chong watched calmly at the animals running for their lives.

"What's happening?" After a while, Ye Chong asked calmly, pointing towards the stampede. He had heard Old Sang De's breathing becoming calmer.

Old Sang De answered with a trembling voice, "It's the beast stampede ... The beast stampede ... 10 years ... There should be 10 more years ..." Old Sang De spoke hopelessly.

Beast stampede? Ye Chong did not understand.

Old Sang De vented his frustration for a while before finally calming down, and began to explain to Ye Chong about the beast stampede.

The beast stampede happens once every 200 years. These wild animals were herded. Archipelago's beast stampede was caused by the migration of a particular species of bird. The steelbat was a bird species that lived in the deepest parts of the Archipelago, and the real king of this world. Their sharp claws and steely beaks and legs could break through the defenses of a scalex, king of the land animals. With the exception of the animals that lived underwater, the steelbats were the nemesis of all other beasts. This supremacy was a result of their ability to fly.

The most terrifying thing about the steelbats was that they always come in swarms, in the hundreds and thousands.

The beast stampede was caused by these steelbats. Every 200 years, the steelbats would migrate. They could group together and

fly towards the other side of the Archipelago. Steelbats liked to kill during their migration. Any animals in their way would be killed. With the advantage of flight, they were an uncontrollable killing wave. Hence, about three months before the migration began, the sensitive animals would run desperately to save themselves, hence causing the beast stampede.

Ye Chong was speechless. He never imagined that an animal could be so terrifying. However, he quickly accepted the fact. It was logical that the flying steelbats had the definite upper hand. Besides, with their offensive claws and beaks, it was no wonder that they were at the top of the food chain.

Old Sang De felt hopeless. "I didn't think that the beast stampede this time would happen 10 years earlier. It looks like we'll have to move with the beasts. But we're not prepared this time, we're not ..." Everyone looked grim. A large scale migration was not so easy to achieve. No one knew what lay ahead. Without preparation, a long distance migration like this would be disastrous for the villagers.

"We're migrating too?" Ye Chong asked abruptly.

Old Sang De replied helplessly, "Or what? The steelbats always come in huge waves. According to our ancestors, whenever the steelbats come, they would cover the skies. The migration would take an entire month. No one wants to leave here. We don't even know what's ahead of our journey. However, we're defenseless against the steelbats." Old Sang De looked pathetic, and the people around him also wore saddened expressions.

"The beast stampede happens three months before the steelbats migrate, right?" Ye Chong asked suddenly.

"Yes," Old Sang De answered carelessly.

"Three months ..." Ye Chong muttered as he made a quick estimation. If they migrate now, no one knew when they would reach safety. His plan to save Mu and Shang would also be ruined.

"Those d*mned steelbats!" Ye Chong cursed inwardly at the species that he had never even met before.

According to Old Sang De, the steelbats were very formidable. However, Ye Chong believed that no matter how powerful animals were, they were still animals, and could never compete against humans. If they had mechs, they would never be so afraid of the steelbats! In the Five Galaxies, there were even adventurers who specialized in hunting mutants.

"Mechs!" Ye Chong realized then. "That's right, mechs!"

Ye Chong did a quick calculation in his mind, and made his decision.

Ye Chong asked Old Sang De, "The migration this time, how many do you think will survive it?"

The question was the centre of Old Sang De's worries. He replied in a frail voice, "If we're lucky, maybe a third of us. The mayaberries still need another two months to ripen. We don't have enough food." However, he quickly gathered himself and said, "Don't worry, sir, we will ensure your safety. Once we reach our new home, you'll be able to help us thrive again, sir." Old Sang De looked to Ye Chong sincerely.

"I have a plan," Ye Chong said plainly, looking straight back at Old Sang De.

The atmosphere in the Sang Family Village was hectic. Everyone busied themselves with their tasks.

At the bone dumping site, the villagers made a long line, with Sang Ling and Sang Fan at the entrance to organize them. Every villager received some skeletons from Sang Fan, and an animal hide with a picture drawn on it from Sang Ling.

Sang Fan raised his voice and said, "Everyone listen up, once you get your skeletons, carve them based on the drawings that Sang Ling pass to you. You must have received the tools from our good

sir. You've all made skeleton love tokens before, so this will not be hard. However, remember, you must follow the drawings exactly when you carve. Once you're done, pass the skeletons to me for inspection. If you ruined your skeletons, come here and find another one yourself. I believe you all know what's happening now. Yesterday, the beast stampede had begun. Right now, what we're doing is for the protection of the Sang Family Village. Everyone, please work as fast as you can. Our survival depends on it. The more skeletons you carve, the better our chances to survive this. Understand?"

"Understood!" The villagers promised in reply.

The 300 most skillful carvers of the village were gathered together. They worked like students, silently and intently. Leading them was the second most influential person in the village, the healer Sang Rubei.

The short, old man looked solemn. He spoke lowly, "Your tasks are key to our plan. The drawing you see before you is your carving objective. Everyone is assigned with only one kind of part. From today onwards, your job is to carve, and only carve. Food will be sent to you. All you need to do is carve and carve. The fate of the village lies in your hands. Let's work hard!"

"Yes." The reply came not too loudly, but in perfect sync.

All the women and children were assigned with other tasks by the village head. "Those in charge of the mayaberries, your tasks remain unchanged. We are two months from harvesting, do not slack in your duties. The village depends on you."

A middle aged woman answered for the rest, "Don't feel sorry, Village Head, we'll be diligent."

Old Sang De nodded, satisfied. He then turned to the younger people around him and said, "Children, it's time for you to contribute to the village, are you afraid to work hard?"

"No!" The innocent, young voices replied in waves, but there was the unmistakable quality of youthful vigor.

"Alright, you're all good children!" Old Sang De look at them warmly, patting one of them on the head in gratefulness. "Now this grandfather here has a mission for you. You see those mildstones? You'll each get a box later. All you have to do is to shape them such that they could fit inside the box. Remember, they must fit exactly."

"Okay," the children answered with determination.

Chapter 276: Sang Family Village - Battle for Survival II

Ye Chong stood in front of the battalion, lead by Sang Pu. This 500-strong battalion consisted of the Sang Family Village's strongest. They were all the cream of the crop. All the lavagold mined by the Sang Family Village had been used up by Ye Chong, converted into the lavagold swords and pikes in their hands. The pikes, made completely of lavagold, looked the same as their bitterwood counterparts. The village head, Sang De was deeply reluctant to use such a large amount of lavagold.

500 villagers stood silently at attention, looking capable and deadly. Ye Chong nodded, satisfied. For someone like him, who had a long history of fighting for his life, he knew that the aura emanating from this battalion could only be the result of a long history of war and killing. Only true veterans would have this aura. Even the strongest mech pilots from the Five Galaxies or the Four Forces would not be like this. It had been too long since their last war!

The villagers here had battled against the wild beasts that were even stronger than mutants every day, due to their primitive technology. Training began since they were young, and they had grown up fighting for their lives. From this, warriors were born. Ye Chong believed that no other soldiers would be so determined as the villagers here were when it came to war.

Ye Chong spoke slowly with a solemn and steely voice, "Our objective is to hunt. 10 days. We only have 10 days left." There was no need for more elaboration with this battalion. He gave the order without further explanation. In 10 days, they should have their first batch of products.

The tension was heavy enough to suffocate.

"Pu, you're in command."

"Yes sir," Sang Pu bowed and took over. Ye Chong withdrew Han Jia, slipped into the pilot cabin and flew off.

Sang Pu looked up at Han Jia in the air, for a moment, jealous of the mech. However, he quickly lowered his gaze to the battalion and waved. "Move out."

The battalion divided into tens of platoons, quickly moving out of the village. The 500-strong battalion moved silently. Ye Chong feasted at the sight of the platoons moving around each other, covering their comrades as they advanced.

The animals outside the village did not notice the Sang Family Village. They were focused on only running. However, some of the wild beasts would still run into the valley in front of the Sang Family Village. Ye Chong's targets were these animals. No one dared to meddle with the larger stampede outside, or they would risk being run over by the massive stampede before the steelbats even arrived.

Every platoon was tasked to hunt one animal. They evaded attacks as they ambushed or lured their prey, or worked with other platoons to hunt the animals down. The animals were quickly killed. Ye Chong was impressed with their efficiency. The villagers battle strategies were also quite the eye-opener.

They reminded him of Black Cove and the Sanctuary.

They fought at close range, like Black Cove mech pilots, but their cooperative strategies bore resemblance to the Sanctuary. However, compared to the Sanctuary, they had no mechs. The instinctive cooperation between the villagers was born out of actual combat experience, and definitely more superior. They were also more experienced and knowledgeable in terms of strategizing.

Soon, the attacks became swifter and deadlier, as the villagers got used to their new weapons.

Ye Chong grew excited as he watched the villagers fight. His

fingers moved, and Han Jia swoop down to attack.

The villagers looked up the God-like Han Jia with reverence. What the mech did next impressed even the most elite of the villagers. Was this the true power of a mech?

Han Jia's two one-and-a-half-meter gray daggers were sharp. No animal would be able to stop them. The mech's lithe figure danced purposefully across the sky as the villagers watched in awe. Often, the mech would take down a few wild beasts at a time. The man was as dangerous as the rumors told. The daggers reflected a silvery gleam of death, fatal in its every attack. The animals were all cut or stabbed at vulnerable places, such as the throat or the heart. The villagers shuddered as they watched, thinking, "Thank the Heavens that he's on our side."

The villagers ignored the dead animals, and continued to find other living ones in the valley. The hunt was still on.

Ten days passed. With Ye Chong joining in, and the new weapons they had, the operation was fruitful, yielding more than anyone had anticipated. When Sang Pu arranged for the villagers to move the first day's kills into the village, the villagers were shocked to see the valley covered with animal bodies, some still warm. The valley was thick with the scent of blood.

After the initial shock, everyone was overjoyed. To them, these dead animals were food. With so many animals, it would last them for quite a while.

Ten days passed in the blink of an eye. The entire Sang Family Village bustled with activity every day like clockwork. Everyone looked tired, with red puffy eyes, but no one gave up on their tasks to rest. Everyone was working hard for the fates of their own, their families, and the village itself. They may not completely understand their tasks, but no one questioned the importance of them, since the tasks came from the honored man himself.

The villagers were hopeless when they first saw the beast

stampede. Some even thought it was the end of the world. The honored man, strong and mysterious as he was, however, had brought them hope.

Everyone respected the young man from the bottom of their hearts. The man led the hunting team during the day, and continued to work until the late night.

After 10 days, the first batch of products were finished. Spread before Ye Chong was a bunch of parts, arranged based on their functionalities. Ye Chong's helpers listened to him as he explained.

"This engine model is quite easy to assemble. See this, there's a V-shaped wedge here. And here ..." Ye Chong assembled the engine, part by part. Due to the circumstances, he had vastly simplified this Destiny engine model.

This was Ye Chong's plan - through the enormous amount of animal skeletons and available manpower, they would mass produce the simplest full-skeleton mechs and prepare for a battle to protect the Sang Family Village.

The enviable resources here had allowed Ye Chong to even consider this plan. The skeletons were dense and tough, with excellent properties. Ye Chong did not even need to chemically process them. All villagers of age here have had some experience in skeleton carving, and that provided enough manpower to carve the skeleton parts. With skeletons accumulated over centuries in the dumping site, Ye Chong did not need to hunt more animals for raw material.

More importantly, if they could not survive this trial, he would not be able to rescue Mu and Shang in the Red Sea. Ye Chong could only try his best to come up with a solution.

The 10-day hunting spree, with Ye Chong's aid, had resulted in a large amount of meat available for the villagers. The meat was processed and stored. The cave used to store food was almost filled up. With the mayaberries ripening in another two months, the

food would be enough to last them for a long time. The 10-day hunt had depleted all of Han Jia's energy cells. However, Ye Chong did not worry about it. He knew that once the steelbats arrived, his mech would not make a significant difference in the final outcome.

When he first saw the storage cavern, Ye Chong had thought of excavating a cave for shelter. Later, Old Sang De had explained to him that the caves he saw in Archipelago were naturally formed. Digging was extremely difficult here. The earth was unusually solid, and it grew steadily harder the deeper one went. Excavating a cave enough to fit a hundred people would take a very long time, even with the lavagold tools they had. Before this, they did not even consider it a possibility.

After seeing the final assembled product, even Ye Chong was not confident of its capabilities.

By Ye Chong's standard, this was not really a mech. Since there was no photon processor, Ye Chong could not build a conventional mech. He was actually inspired by racing mechs, the kind built for speed. From an aerodynamic point of view, the usual mech design was not suitable for high speeds.

Ye Chong's design was based on simple principles. It must be easy to assemble, able to fly, and armed with some offensive capabilities.

Based on these principles, Ye Chong came up with the current design.

The mech's main body was shaped like a water droplet, with four sharp skeleton blades inlaid on its surface, much like four leaves on a water droplet. At the tip of the water-droplet body, was a sharp skeleton spear. This spear was replaceable, and was firmly attached to the body.

There were no photon circuits or the like in this thing. All the parts were connected through the most basic mechanical joints.

While the thing could fly, in theory, Ye Chong doubted its reliability. He looked around him. It seemed that he was the only suitable candidate to test fly this vehicle.

He opened the cabin door. Simple cabin pressurization was not a problem for Ye Chong. Ye Chong was quite satisfied with its hydraulic suspension system. Sang Fan had found a type of liquid by accident, that was quite suited for this purpose.

"At least it's a kind of protection for the pilot," Ye Chong could only console himself so.

Chapter 277: Sang Family Village - Battle for Survival III

There was no communication system, no photon processor, no holographic scanning system, no mechanical arm, no nothing. This was such a bare unit. If it was in the Five Galaxies, Ye Chong would be too embarrassed to show it. Now though, he had no choice.

Ye Chong sat in the pilot cabin, studying the primitive control levers, more than vexed. Was this really a control dashboard? What a joke! How can there be a dashboard without a photon processor?

As the designer, Ye Chong was at least familiar with the control levers.

He tried pulling the lever up, and the machine lifted off silently into the air. The Destiny engine was truly powerful, even in its simplified form. The engine was the part that Ye Chong was happiest with. The performance of a simplified Destiny engine powered by mildstone was much better than he anticipated.

"Good Heavens, it can fly?"

"Is this a mech?" Ye Chong's helpers all stared in wonder, discussing amongst themselves. They all looked very excited. Mechs were their biggest dreams. No one had thought that the good sir was actually building a mech!

Swish! The mech flew off swiftly like an arrow.

After the initial confusion, Ye Chong quickly got used to handling the control levers. He maneuvered the mech more confidently and easily. The empty sky allowed him to fly without worry.

All in all, Ye Chong was quite satisfied with this flying machine.

The machine's main strength was its wonderful speed. While he

could not exactly measure it, Ye Chong estimated from his experience that it could reach around Mach 15 to Mach 20. This was within the atmosphere. If it was in outer space, Ye Chong believed that it could go even faster.

Another advantage was its ability to change course. The machine was fitted with many auxiliary engines that allowed high motion flexibility in space.

Collision - that was the name Ye Chong had in mind for this flying machine, even if it was not really a mech by any standards. It's main means of offense was the skeleton spear at its tip, and the attack method was by a collision with the enemy. Ye Chong had prepared two types of skeleton spears for the mech. One was the five-meter long spear fitted on his unit right now. At high speeds, its sharp tip could break through very thick barriers. Ye Chong believed that even Han Jia could be penetrated if it was hit. However, the spear broke easily, and was not suitable for prolonged combat.

The other type of spear was only two meters long, with a thicker shaft, and looked more like a rounded stump. While it could not deal as much damage as the former type of spear, it was harder to break, and suitable to use repeatedly. With Collision's speed, Ye Chong believed that any mech would suffer a dent from the attack of this spear. If it was a mech with thinner armour, it might even be reduced to a wreckage.

Aside from the spear, Collision also had its four sharply honed skeleton fins.

It was obvious that Collision's power came from its excellent speed. Without it, the mech would be totally useless. If it was not for the current situation, no one would have built a machine so full of weaknesses. After all, with such a powerful engine, it could be fitted into an actual mech, complete with far superior combat abilities, and not a simple machine like this.

Ye Chong felt helpless in this situation. Given the resources available, building a flying machine was already a huge success. Collision's cabin was specially reinforced, since attack by collision was a typical self-damaging means of attack.

Ye Chong did not have high hopes on Collision. As long as they can fight on even ground with the steelbats, he would be satisfied. It would be foolish to use the mech to battle against another mech. Collision was too fragile for that.

Ye Chong never imagined that this third-grade flying machine that he built out of desperation, the primitive and backward Collision, would leave its deep mark in the upcoming battle, the legendary war that would be told for generations to come!

If the Sang Family Village was like a bonfire, then the birth of Collision was like feeding the rage of the fire.

The good sir's following instructions further stoke their emotions to a higher point.

He personally selected the 500 villagers whom Sang Pu had led into the hunting operation to be the first of them all to learn how to fly Collision. Everyone went crazy! They quickly worked on the skeleton parts, hoping to be the next ones to learn to fly Collision. Everyone realised that the dream they always had was now close within their grasps.

The busiest villagers were Sang Fan and his team. If the 500 villagers were to all learn how to fly Collision, then there must be 500 Collision mechs ready for use. Sang Fan received permission from Ye Chong to expand his assembly team to speed up production. As the crew of skeleton carvers grew more familiar with their tasks, the parts began to arrive faster. Collision's production accelerated every day.

Ye Chong admired the Sang family villagers greatly. They were down-to-earth, hardworking, brave, and disciplined. They were excellent warriors in all respects.

These qualities were apparent from the 500 villagers learning to fly Collision. None of them backed out. They did not fear death, only lack of action. They improved so fast that even Ye Chong was surprised. It was as though they were all talented in flying Collisions. Their hands moved quickly, and they did not suffer any undesirable side effects from flying.

However, Ye Chong quickly realised the reason for this. The villagers were all combat experts. Ye Chong was certain that even a Jie expert from the Five Galaxies would have a hard time facing any of the villagers. The villagers were quick and sensitive, their numerous battles for survival strengthening their determination and mental fortitude. Those were the reasons for their swift improvement.

If it were conventional mechs, they would not have improved so fast. Conventional mechs were far more complicated than Collision. The control dashboard was more convenient for normal mech pilots, allowing them more flexibility in the mech's movements. However, for the uninitiated like the Sang family villagers, primitive control levers were easier to learn.

The only thing they needed to learn with Collision was how to fly it.

Ye Chong taught them everything he knew, and their performance continued to surprise him. For example, when Ye Chong taught them evasive maneuvers, they quickly came up with their own techniques, and most of them were quite effective. They quickly mastered Collision's only way of attacking. It occurred to Ye Chong then that if the mechs from the Five Galaxies were to face these villagers in Collision, it would not be an easy battle.

What impressed Ye Chong the most was their cooperation. Ye Chong was not aware of this, but while the villagers approved of individual strength, then did not subscribe to solo heroism. Here, an individual's strength was too little. Without cooperation, one would live a short life.

The intuition they developed from a long history of fighting together now provided them with a strong advantage. Everyone knew their roles, and what they could do to improve their position. This was intriguing to Ye Chong, since he knew that Collision was not equipped with any communication device.

Time was growing short. The beast stampede continued before the valley in front of the village. The day the steelbats arrived was approaching. However, all the villagers felt confident, as they continued with their tasks.

The second batch of mech pilots to receive training numbered 10,000. Their instructors were the first 500 villagers. Ye Chong handed over the training to Sang Pu, since he noticed that the man was actually an excellent instructor. Sang Pu was more skilled in strategizing and analyzing battles, unlike an amateur like himself.

Everything proceeded as planned. There was Sang Pu for flying instructions, Sang Fan for mech assembly, Sang Rube for engine manufacture, Sang Ling for mech parts, and the village head himself, Sang De for mildstone shaping and mayaberry harvesting. Ye Chong suddenly found himself idle.

He thought of Han Jia with its nearly empty energy cell, and decided that it was time to do something about it. With nonlinear cobalite, Ye Chong planned to insert a teardrop mineralite into Han Jia. He was already very familiar with how to harvest energy from teardrop mineralite, so the modification on Han Jia did not take too long. He was surprised, however, to find that the teardrop mineralite could amplify the power of the Destiny engine.

If Mu and Shang's theory was right, then this teardrop mineralite could last Han Jia for a century.

Ye Chong really wanted to do some research on this mysterious teardrop mineralite, but he only had two pieces with him, and they were too precious to experiment with.

Now that he was in the mood for research, Ye Chong directed his

enthusiasm towards mildstone. Ye Chong thought highly of this mildstone as well. While it was not as powerful as teardrop mineralite, it was still the only mineral here that could store enough energy to power their hopes.

Energy was the core of modern science and technology.

Besides, there was another thing about mildstone that Ye Chong noticed. The last time he accidentally caused a mildstone to explode, he remembered the huge destructive power clearly. Mildstone could definitely store a huge amount of energy. If all these energy could be released in a short burst, it would be quite destructive.

Chapter 278: Sang Family Village - Battle for Survival IV

As far as Ye Chong was concerned, the current pattern of Collision's attack would be too simple to face against the raid. Assuming the description by the chief was true, Ye Chong would not be confident to face the battle.

And the following days, BOOM, passed rather lively at the Sang village, for explosions would come roaring from the sir's research room along with columns of smoke rising to the sky. Boom! There were even times when they witnessed white light bursting from the place. And to their disbelief, at one time the whole research foundation blasted off itself after an explosion, leaving a giant crater on the ground. Boom!

Boom! Boom! Bang! Boom!

The miraculous part uttered by every villager in their bewilderment was, sir, without fail, had always been coming out in one piece. And as time went, the daily explosion scheme had immersed itself in the routine of the villagers effortlessly. To their shocking discovery, the frequency of explosion had been drastically reduced itself over the time, in the end, no explosion had occurred again.

Klink!

Phew...

Ye Chong took a deep breath, as his squinted eyes set upon the crude-looking sphere resting in his hand. It had the size of his fist and yes he made it; it was his latest invention. The craftsmanship of the appearance did not matter, for that was the last thing on his list.

Ye Chong had invested ounces of his effort into the research of mildstone in order to find a way to trigger the explosion. He even

moved everything out from his research room, including that hefty processor. And to make sure that he would not become the mortality of his own experiment, he performed every of his experiment only after putting on the Guardian.

But well, even with the superior guard of the Guardian, Ye Chong remained rolling on the ground upon every chemical reaction. The momentum caused by the blow was not something that the human anatomy was designed for. If it was not the Guardian, he would have been counting his negative health points on the way to hell.

At the very least, eventually, finally, the research had been accomplished.

The valley in the outskirts of the village was the only entrance to the Sang Family village. Ye Chong was dragged there by Sang Pu, along with Sang Fan and Sang Ling. And Sang Ling's attitude towards Ye Chong had become much more dignified, which was a little uneasy for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong passed Sang Pu a sphere, "Toss this there," he said while pointing at a slope near the valley.

Sang Pu, although looking bewildered, did not withdraw his swinging arm, instead, his right arm tensed, as he launched that sphere all the way towards the slope at the other side. The force was so strong that one could hear sound of the wind piercing, with a thin lining crossing over the azure.

BOOM!

A thunderous explosion was heard, the landing point of the sphere was engulfed by column of white smoke. Everybody, except for Ye Chong, was stunned by the explosion, as their face flinched with unknown horror.

A giant crater was revealed as the column of white smoke parted away, with a size way larger than the crater Ye Chong made near the research room before.

Gasp! The men and lady breathed in their fear.

"T-t-this... what... is this?" Sang Pu, who tried too hard to act calm, was still clogging on his words. The gigantic crater, as if exerting attraction one-of-a-kind, was taking all of their attention.

Thump! Piles of rocks and earth slid from the top, half of the narrow valley was utterly filled.

"Compression explosives," Ye Chong stated briefly. He was a little disappointed because the blow did not turn out to be as enormous as he presumed. Ye Chong who had seen an array of fireworks in the darkest space had an unimpressed expression of a boy seeing a simple sparkler on the last night of summer. He actually intended to process the compression explosives into some sort of an additional grenade for the village mech. As habitually as he got whenever mech was concerned, he automatically assumed the foes to be always a mech pilot, one from the 4 forces especially.

Missiles had taken up a dark bloody spot of history of humankind ever since war happened centuries ago. But intergalactic war soon dethroned the almighty missiles after humanity shifted into the galaxy. Additionally as hologramic detection system was invented, missiles again, being the slow and outdated weaponry were forced out of the stage immediately. Then the energy-based weaponry came in and took the place, like the heat-ray guns for example.

Ye Chong did not believe that missile-based weaponry was completely obsolete. He himself had once used a similar weaponry, namely the Beauty's Secretion. The outcome of the war had taken a turn for him in the end, even with the most fearsome Black Covers. It was not that the missiles could not cause fatal damages to the target mechs, it was simply that they travelled too slowly in the boundless space and with those advanced detection system in-built with vast scope, most missiles would have been annihilated way before they touched the mech or spaceship.

The only fact that led to Ye Chong's anti-theoretical success was

the material itself. Those missiles were solely made out of skeletons, which could go undetected by the system, thus the success of a new silent killer in the dark.

Of course, the concept only remained as a concept, an idea in his mind. Assuming he would really make the compression as a grenade to be launched, he would have to design a kind of miniature engine to help them navigate through the space at considerable distance or it would be hardly anything in the space than a cluster of ornaments to be smashed. Miniature engines were not the hardest part of his plan, the time limitation was however, since every man and woman in the village had been working on the Collision itself.

That was an untick on Ye Chong's checklist. Inability for mass-production equals "out of his consideration". Ye Chong was more concerned on how he should resolve the upcoming problem without losing everything.

"Great, sir!" Shouted Sang Fan excitedly, which toppled Ye Chong's thoughts, "So great! That means we got a new powerful weapon? Compression explosives? Compression explosives! This strength... this marvelous strength... such power!"

"Yeah. Not that marvelous though," said Ye Chong coldly, "It did give a nice firework but it could hardly travel. No engine, no homing feature either. Not really practical."

"Engine? Sir?" Sang Fan could not comprehend, "Why would we need engines sir? Why can't we just toss it?"

Right!

Ye Chong realized something. Sang Fan was right, he did make a mistake. This was never an intergalactic war to begin with! Their enemies were not sheltered in a layer of high quality alloys, they were merely a type of beast rampaging in the woods! With the strength of the Sang, the reachability of the explosives would be more than fearsome!

Ye Chong began visualizing the scene where the villagers launched the grenades over the sky with their strength competent enough for a Jie expert. Horrifying! A tiny piece of rock could already be destructive when it was in the hand of a Jie expert, now replace the rock with an actual bomb, in the hand of the well-trained villagers... Seriously...

Yes! Ye Chong was inspired. Even if the enemies were coming in a mech, the continuous shower lobbed by the villagers would be annihilating at close range!

"Right, sir?" Supported Sang Ling, "Sir please do not forget we had always been guided by rock-tossing daily as we hunt. Everybody knows rock-tossing in the village, who needs to aim anyway?" Sang Ling was right as well. The villagers had been trained to test if there was a gravity region at the front by lobbing a piece of rock. This was their bread and butter, the sole trick for their survival. So everybody must know it well to be able to lob far enough, accurate enough as they pleased.

Hmmm... that means...

Ye Chong got the message quickly, he began mumbling... I seemed to have created a monster for the villagers...

"Sir? Sir!" Sang Pu the silent one suddenly initiated, "Is it possible to block the opening of the valley?"

Ye Chong flinched, "Umm..." He took a glance at the partially blocked valley, "Possible." He nodded.

"Pu, my brother..." Sang Fan who could not get what Sang Pu meant, asked, "Why would we block the opening?"

"This is the only entrance to our village," pointed Sang Pu at the opening. "If we blocked it, that means we only have to look up for our battle. We could have lesser distraction on our guard. Also, I was worried that if it was the Steelbat that caused the beast to attack us, they would join the fight too. It would be nasty, so we

block the opening, one less thing to worry."

Ye Chong looked all impressed at Sang Pu. He is the candidate to succeed to the village. Thoughtful, careful to details. The other two Sangs were looking impressed as well.

"Sir. Excuse me..." Sang Fan was too a quick thinker, "Is it possible to blow a hole with compression explosive?"

"Well this..." Ye Chong gave a thought, "Great idea but explosion on a certain orbit of direction would require some works. I was not really an expert on this."

The Sangs were looking disappointed. It would be wonderful if they could create caves in a split second since with caves they would be able to hide themselves from the Steelbats, which also meant less mortality.

Since the suggestion was not feasible to run at all, they eventually discarded the tempting idea. They were showing immense gratitude towards the inclusion of a new powerful weapon though. They believed they had hit the jackpot as compared to their forebears who had progressed almost nothing over the past 500 years and now they got metallic weaponry, an actual mech and even a highly compressed explosive. The villagers were very much convinced that they would once raise upon the other races again as soon as they survived the crisis this time.

Looking at Sir who was pondering in the meantime, their eyes were overflowed with appreciation and respect. It was this teacher from the mystery, with his vast knowledge unfitting to his youth, that had brought all these gifts, striking the hope of the tribe in their luxuries.

So the villagers received a new task from the teacher - production of compression explosives. Ye Chong was surprised though, that this little bomb actually had taken over Collision, becoming the favorite among the Sangs.

Well, unlike Collision, the explosive was simple to use while being able to dish out significant damage, and the roar it produced was exciting to the ears of the villagers.

The production of Collision was coming to an end as well, fortunately, or the villagers might be procrastinating over their new toy. Collision, the product of the overclocked villagers had become the standard setup at everyone's home. The mechs would flock upon sky, stampeding the ground daily. It was scenic to see about a hundred thousand mechs traveling like a military air force on a normal afternoon. Ye Chong wondered if the sky would remain that scenic if those Steelbats ever came. The scene had reminded him again the power of cooperation, the bond of a group. It was powerful indeed. But... yes, Ye Chong realized one big catch he almost missed - there was no dimensional keystone, where would these hundred thousand mechs go? Certainly they could have landed in their village, however to accommodate mechs of this amount would be far insufficient for a tiny village in the middle of the valleys. Sang Pu eventually picked a plain next to the mountain behind the village. It was spacious enough to accommodate those mechs, looking like the parking place on Christmas Eve.

Still, it would take around 10 minutes of running to travel to the plain from the village. Sighed Ye Chong, realizing that it would be actually a hassle to introduce a super hi-tech way ahead the chronological order of invention. To assure those 10 minutes of safety were assured, Sang Pu succumbed to sending off a giant flock of Collision to scout the area ahead to see if there were a nest of Steelbats.

2 months had lapsed and everyone was given a Collision mech. And there was one instance where Ye Chong ran out of skeletons to produce stuffs, which Sang Pu immediately resolved by calling his men to hunt for more bones. It was a nice opportunity to test out Collision as they piloted the mech to hunt. And that was the first

time they realized the fact that, hunting could have been this hassle-free and the beasts could have been this weak, easily conquered.

The beasts had not scurried away from the proximity of the village. Nevertheless, "Darkness" the once fearsome name branded in the mind of the villagers had degraded into a new hunting ground with Collision.

It usually took the villagers a straight impale, a lift with the spear, then skeleton spears would have a few bulky animals skewed tidily on the shaft. The case where Ye Chong worried about the spears breaking had never occurred, which had affirmed the villagers' confidence. And soon, after countless encounters, the villagers discovered a more effective way to eradicate their foes.

They maintained a high velocity and travelled right above the beast. Utilizing the 4 sharp skeleton wings on the body of Collision, the blades danced like the Reaper would slice upon the enemies, that one glide they only took, the Darkness would be immediately cut open, bleeding and having its inside rolling out, tainting the ground with thunderous cry. The beasts were bisected, with a clear cut upon.

As time went, more villagers joined the troop after completing the training. Ye Chong got more skeletons in the inventory. But Sang Pu felt it was yet the time to stop the hunt. The Darkness had convinced him the fact that the hunt would provide the villagers the more valuable loot - experience itself!

An on-hand fight would always be the standard procedure to power up a fighter, especially if the fighter was in a troop to begin with. Since there lacked a kind of communicative device, the villagers had to rely on their sense of war to carry out the right action in correspondence to the situation.

It sounded easy on paper but it was a mess, as they soon realized, a highly frequent mess. It was hard for one to even sort out friends

and foes with mechs this many in the sky. They had a conference on it and Sang Ling actually gave a pretty good solution - they would dye the mechs into different colors in accordance with the position of the pilots in the team. Sang Pu would be the supreme leader, thus the bright red tone; after that the blue would follow, it would be black, and then white at the lowest. At both sides of every Collision would have 3 types of Lightstones in different colors embedded, there would be also a plate before each stone, it would be like a signal where the plate could be placed down to block the beam of the stones. Thus, every secondary leaders of the team could give commands by flicking signals. Sang Ling even designed a set of codes using the stones' color as well as the frequency for communication. Ye Chong who was listening at one corner, felt impressed with Sang Ling. "Looks like she was not a bimbo after all. Shang sometimes just likes to exaggerate things..."

The new codes brought up another period of tutorial among the villagers, with each of them having a booklet in the hands while their heads spinning along with their recitation.

It was as effective as the way Sang Ling mentioned it, as the villagers were not only highly experienced, their rapports were great too. They needed no sophisticated language, a few blinks of different colors would be more than enough to tell them what their teammates planned to do.

Even Sang Pu the more demanding one was showing satisfaction on his current troop. Ye Chong? Well, he was losing his head over the codes. He seriously could not imagine how a massive troop could communicate without a standard communicative device but a mere set of blinking lights, especially when the villagers had actually no issue using the code while being able to have a much more coordinated expedition.

Every villager was feeling exhilarated of their improvement. The harvest of Twinkleblues marked also the end of their last concern. The Sangs, with their blood surged from the war itself, were

looking forward to this war, the battle of survival with the Steelbats.

Chapter 279: Sang Family Village - Battle for Survival V

"Here they come!" Announced the returning Collision from the woods, which stirred a storm among the villagers as they set their feet running.

15 Collisions were sent off as a scouting team to check out if the Steelbats were approaching in reality. And there were actually 10 similar teams taking shifts to scout the surrounding daily.

"Team Four, follow up. Now!"

"Team Eight, carry out according to plans!"

The crowd disintegrated into countless afterimages of silhouettes. The Sangs sure had some rapid feet. It almost felt like a crowd of Jie experts piloting their mechs over one peak and another. It was epic, truly epic.

This would be the most major operation the Sangs had ever launched. The first batch of Collisions took flight in a number of 5000 and the sky right above the Sang village was fully enveloped by them. Other than elderly or children who could hardly harm a fly, all villagers including the women armed themselves with weapons and started moving.

Right at the heart of the valley there parked countless Collisions. The valley where the village located was not that spacious to begin with, but it would be too risky to park them at the plain as the Steelbats might have raided the place before the battle happened. So after a moment of discussion, they gave up their former setting and cramped themselves. Sang De, the chief said that the Steelbats would arrive with darkness engulfing the world, with nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. The sky would only have one color by then, the color of Steelbats - dark, darker than black.

So, united we stand, stronger we grow. Thought Ye Chong.

Apart from a safe house for the elderly and children, the remaining housing area had been transformed into the parking ground for the mechs. One could see every single shelter had at least one mech landed on it, while some were even installed with a strange kind of hook to hang those mechs. Now, while it would sound a little insane to have a mech parked on a foundation made out of twigs and leaves, it would be a different story if the mech was made out of pure skeletons, which were much, much lighter. Of course, as far as logic would apply, nobody would park their moving alloys on their wooden home, that would devastate the shelter immediately. To ensure safety though, reinforcement had been carried out on every pillar of the houses, especially the safe house for the weak, that was much, much sturdier.

There were also mechs parked on the slope. The villagers had never exited the cabin ever since, for they would spend the following days eating, battling, sleeping in the mech itself. It was those times which one would call the "emergency period" or "evacuation time".

The only entrance to the village had been completely swamped by the debris from the explosion Sang Pu caused at both sides of the mountain using compression explosives. As planned, their remaining concern would only be the above, nothing on the ground. The mountain had become their walls of defense from technically everything on the ground.

The Steelbats were extremely bloodthirsty during their migration, they would not halt their flight for food however. They would peck, but would not ground themselves and hunt, they would instead keep advancing, in other words, the Sang villagers would be declared as succeeded the operation if they could last till the Steelbats flew away completely.

Everyone was pumped in their position, anticipating the arrival of the flying devil. Sang Tie was one of the thrilled warriors. It was one major role he got being at the frontmost line, which every

villager was acting envy upon. No one would go and argue for the placement though, as they all recognized the strength of Sang Tie, who stood easily the top 100 fighters in the village. Moreover, the most highly respected man, the teacher was giving recognition towards his piloting skill as well. That would be a solid evidence since the teacher hardly demonstrated his recognition towards things. So his popularity among the ladies was well-justified.

Sang Tie could reminisced the very scene when the teacher complimented his performance that day. It was, he strongly believed, the happiest few seconds of his life. The teacher, sir, was the idol highly regarded by all younger folks in the village, including he himself. Never once he would dream of gliding into the air, and there sir was, zooming into the air as if a rock he tossed. The most respectable figure in the village was no longer the chief, but the teacher, the young yet resourceful teacher.

Okay, no time for that. He bucked up and looked upon the sky, the war was just around the corner. He did not panic however, since he, like every other man and woman in their position did, believed that they would succeed as long as the teacher stood by their side. He was the leader of a rescue team of the frontline. The team was mainly consisted of the experts of the tribe, in which most of them was the students specially chosen by the teacher himself for the first flying course he conducted, including Sang Tie.

A "course" it was called yet the teacher had only taught the piloting procedure once. Only the first batch of students to the course was the actual students of the great teacher. And of course these students, a vast 500 of them were calling it an achievement and were proud of it.

The rescue team was formerly led by Sang Pu, who was then raised to the position of the highest commander. So in return, Sang Tie took over.

Another chosen one by the teacher himself! Why must it be him

that always get different treatment! The men seemed to be mutating into a real green-eyed monster soon. The chosen one himself was very proud of his placement though, that he even made up his mind to not shame his teacher by accomplishing this mission flawlessly.

5000 mechs ascended into the sky, spiraling speedily to their respective position. Sang Tie began flicking his signals, the two beams flickered : S-T-A-Y. R-E-A-D-Y. And 500 mechs silently hovered in position behind him. They were body and soul ready. Sang Tie knew his duty well. The team he led was called a rescue team for a reason. He was there to rescue, the support to the war. If the situation was crumbling, his teammates were losing, they would have to launch themselves into the war field, to buy time for the other mechs standby on the ground.

Sang Tie lifted his eyes, seeing teacher piloting that strong and outstanding mech in the midst of the warring troop. It was unique, it was different. A sense of respect rose as the morning sun in him. He swore, feeling pumped, it would be an honor to fight alongside sir, that he would die, with glory and no regret.

Sang Tie was technically wrong of what he presumed. His great teacher, Ye Chong did not really intend to join the first wave. The reason he flew into the sky was merely for spectating purpose. He wanted to see what that horrifying beast of the myth actually looked. Sang Pu, the commander was right next to his teacher, with similar reason that he wanted to have a direct observation on this migration phenomena that only would occur once every 200 years.

And there they saw, a lump of darkness approaching.

It was brutally horrifying! If the namely Darkness formed by the beast was a whirlpool, then these Steelbats would be a real abyssal darkness that would engulf the sun completely. People were shocked. Some villagers zoned out for the first few seconds. The formation was disrupted for a quick while. D-O-W-N. O-N-E-O-O.

Sang Pu gave a quick order to descend all units by a hundred meters. This move was to cover the team within the height of the mountains.

Sang Pu and Han Jia remained at the upper. Since Ye Chong was equipped with real technology, the hologramic detection system, he was the first among all men who discerned the actual appearance of Steelbats.

Steelbats had no feathers, the wings were two thin layer of membranes which spread as wide as 10 meters. Those pairs of legs looked so brawny that it could probably shatter a rock piece with a kick. The claws were sharper than the swords, the beak would pierce an iron wall. Ye Chong who had been hunting mutated lifeforms ever since birth could imagine the potential threats these nasty avifaunas would impose on humanity. Those claws and beak alone could murder even the most fearsome beast on ground.

Steelbats were dark, dark as the coals; their eyes were red, scarlet as the blood diamonds. A petrifying fear they were as they soared through the darkening sky at an alarming velocity. It almost felt as if they had teleported over few hundreds meters after they had just spread their wings.

The lump of darkness came like a prelude to the storm, they were approaching, with constant cries of eagerly hunger as their membrane-wings flapped in threatening waves. The air had already started to smell intense as they approached, while those sounds they made as they travelled were as if one punch on one's torso after another.

The Sang villagers were not ordinary folks, they had been trained, and they had been trained enough to face the arrival of their nemesis. They might be argued to be inexperienced fighting against humanity, but they were truly the rival against the wildest nature. They adjusted themselves to the menacing debut of the Steelbats as they got into their battle stance on their mechs again.

Sang Pu, with Ye Chong, landed quickly. They did not leave their mechs however. No other thing could withstand the raid of the homicidal birds on migration than the mechs made out of alloys, not even those houses with their structures remastered. Likewise to the villagers, they also hid within the mechs, for they had spent the last few days living with the mechs, as if a connection had been built soul to soul. The mechs which seemed to be the most novice in Ye Chong's eyes turned out to be the most formidable stronghold to the villagers. The mechs could be novice, still Ye Chong had that little confidence in them since they were at least made out of the finest skeletons he could find around the place. They could be the toughest tortoise at the very least. Furthermore, Collision was named Collision as it used collision as the main form of attack, so maxing out defense would equal to maxing out the offense as well. Ye Chong even added a few more layers to the surface, technically any physical strike would do no harm to the surface.

Now that explains a lot, why the villagers were relying on their mechs than houses.

And this time, they would be fighting against the lord, the topmost animal in the entire food web of Archipelago, the ruler of the ecosystem, Steelbats. The fight would be for their home, for their other halves, for the next generation, for they themselves! They held no other choice than joining the fierce competition itself. Unlike the residents of the 5 major galaxies, these villagers were strong, probably stronger than anyone else.

Kiak! Kiak kiak kiak!

The leading Steelbat seemed to have gotten a sniff of blood - a sign of living things around.

Kiak! Kiak kiak kiak! Kiak Kiak! Kiak kiak kiak! Kiak!

A piercing cry that Ye Chong had never heard before roared throughout the sky.

Shush!

The leading Steelbat brought one large batch of its compatriots and raided the valley!

The sky darkened.

The people looked upon the clouded sky. The first collision happened seconds later.

G-O. All commanding mechs flashed the same signals simultaneously.

3000 mechs quickly disengaged from the 5000 army as they formed a long slinking chain. S-P-E-E-D! O-O-O! They then accelerated in circle and performed a rather perfect turn, like a slithering serpent rose upon its prey.

The army actually initiated the attack!

Spear up! Piercing spike!

Splash... Splash! Splash! Splash! Splash!

Fleashes fell off to gravity, there was a rain of blood, as the insides of Steelbats tumbled. The skeleton spears of Collision even penetrated the entire body of Steelbat directly upon contact. Their body size easily turned out to be a giant bullseye to be impaled, as some of their compatriots were instantly bisected. Their abdomens ruptured, like the explosion of a water balloon, dark red fluid splashed all over Collisions.

The conservation of momentum was the game winner this time, as the Collision retained its acceleration and smashed upon its enemies. A perfect strike! Or maybe not... Thought the spectators who were hardly smiling on the ground, as their eyes reflected the deflated, deformed mechs which some of them fell miserably.

The Steelbats were carnivores for a reason as a number of them would raid upon one single Collision. They raised their claws, they charged with their beaks, and in the matter of split seconds, the

Collision splintered. The specks were grounded by gravity, as well as the pilots, the sacrificed who went flattened on the ground.

The 3000 armed forces did not hold their attack, as they zoomed all the way up with their spikes. They no longer were able to distinguish directions as they had been swarmed upon by the aggressed Steelbats. The pilots tried their best to make a turnabout but they failed, for they could be smashed into pieces by the Steelbats from the back and the front if they blanked out for once. They sped up, they sped up more, to the front, striving to break through the darkness formed by the Steelbats, hoping for that silver lining of the sky to come.

It was a brief simple collision but the danger was more than what one could get in one's entire life.

Sang Huo, one of the villagers whose mind no longer contained a thing than brutality, remained one order constantly rung in his head, "Charge. Charge! Charge!!! Hit everything!"

He kept charging, he pulled the lever all the way up as he felt the momentum dragging bit and bit of his sanity away, seeing his allies being crushed into specks, hearing the sound of crumbles and clashes on top of his mech. Within blinking of eyes, he was the last one standing, as engulfed by the whirlpool of Steelbats.

Blood boiled even in his veins, as he was cornered; his eyes reddened, his breathe deepened, a storm of fire raided his soul, burning that last bit of his sanity. "Ah!!!" He rampaged.

His hands were pulling the handles madly, the speed had been maximized! The Steelbats lost sight of their target out of sudden, as the skeleton spear pierced the iron skin of the membranes. The Steelbat blocking the way was smashed into a splat of blood right after. The 4 skeleton wings at the body of Collision sliced through the air in sharp whistles. Momentum had broken through the conservation, the energy packed in that blow built up by the speed could easily cut into the bones, would be possible to slice things

into half effortlessly.

Sang Huo's success undoubtedly had caused the will of all other men to burn to the highest height, as their mechs accelerated along, pushing the blade further into the dark clouds.

There were mechs being crashed into pieces as they pushed along. The claws and beaks of the Steelbats were threatening to the flesh but not against the skeleton Collision, which would only fracture at constant attacks. Steelbats were heavy as the steel, they felt coming like a wrecking ball when they smacked themselves onto Collision. If it did not work once, they would do it twice. There were even two to four Steelbats aiming the same mech together, which explained why there were casualties constantly. The villagers were seriously outnumbered, it was as if they had been tossed into a pool of dark toxic, slowly corroding their senses away.

How many Steelbats had he exactly killed? Sang Huo had already lost count, he was no longer in the mind for triviality like that. The same order echoed in his mind, CHARGE! FASTER! Fearlessly he advanced forward, he had hunted enough Steelbats for his entire life, he was more than happy to die if he had to now. He thought back those days being put under the threat of Steelbats, where one of them was more than enough to take his entire tribe out and now there he was, slicing through Steelbats like his daily skew by the bonfire.

The lump of darkness lingered and Sang Huo had his mind all focus at the shining gap between the Steelbats, which would be his key to victory. The lack of sense of direction was not his concern, the fact that he might have been caged by the Steelbats was not his concern, what stayed as his concern was merely that lining that would lead him to success. Sang Huo adjusted his position gradually by making minuscule turns.

The turns were a savior to his life though, since they caused the Steelbats to miss him while being actually wounded by the

skeleton blades on Sang Huo's Collision.

If there were cameras connected to the Virtual World, the forum should be exploding now. Anyone from the 5 major galaxies would have been stupefied upon seeing this. Not even the intensive virtual Neurotraining stimulation could be as frightening as this. A minimum scope of turns, those were what the expert of the experts would be doing as those would wear a man out completely within a brief moment, and those could murder the pilot by bursting the capillaries.

Whatever the Collisions had performed during the war were considered the most hideous, tedious, challenging, fatal movements any pilot of the 5 major galaxies would shun themselves away from, which some of them would even address as the "impossible to do". The Sangs were the only exception to the limitation of human anatomy due to their familiarized exposure to gravity regions as well as continuous systematic military training.

And with those, they actually had transformed the Collision, which Ye Chong assumed to be too primitive and obsolete by today's technological standard, into a monstrous devastation. It was shocking when Ye Chong saw how passionate the villagers were, still remaining in gravity region for training even the last night before daybreak.

For the Collision, the vitality lies within the flight itself. The way it would deal damage, the way it could cause destruction, were both about airborne movement. To master flying it would require both maturity in skills and physique, which were never issues to the Sangs, as they wielded the strength of Jie expert, the speed like Jie expert, the sensibility of space of Jie expert, the rich experience of war like Jie expert. The simplistic control of the colliding technological stone age was perfect for them and in no time they piloted the machinery their own way. They would sting, like the Lavagold to your skin, if you would dare compete their bulkiness.

Sang Huo sought that very weak point to make the next

breakthrough. Within the limited space, it was solely depended on his instinct. Experience would not do the trick, only the sense would.

Now!

Zooooom! Hush...

Sang Huo's world brightened up, as he suddenly got back into the fine blue sky he grew up seeing. Overjoyed he was, I did it? I did it! I really did it!

He would not be satisfied by this little triumph however, as he maintained his course, carried on ascending, he believed his brothers and sisters at the queue behind would also love to see the same sky as his.

A glance downwards, the lump of darkness rumbled and grumbled, engulfing his entire home. He could neither tell the whereabouts of his leader, nor the safety of the villagers. Steelbats, they were everywhere.

Kiiiiiaaaaaaak! Kiak! Kiak! Kiak!

The Steelbats cried outrageously, their flappy wings hissed excitingly. The cloud of darkness moved on to the east with the wind, a long column it was, with a portion still lingering on top of the village.

It was purely horrid, even for a man like Sang Huo with an iron will. Nightmarish scenery it scorched as, in the mind of Sang Huo, probably would tail him for the rest of his life. But he bucked up, as fully aware of his demise in this war, those haunting dreams would be buried together. He was one of those 3000 men who feared no death and desired the once again glory of their tribe, they were ready to sacrifice. So, Sang Huo would only concern what the war would achieve in the end.

The sky of Sang Family Village had become an absolute slaughterhouse. 3000 mechs fired themselves into the air and

smashed the first wave of Steelbats. After an analysis, both Ye Chong and Sang Pu concluded that the first wave of Steelbats was the worst they would face. So as long as the villagers survived Wave One, assuming what the chief stated about a total darkness for the village being true, the Steelbats, as losing the necessary space to accelerate in aggression, would actually be too crowded to return resistance, they would be a flying target.

The good news was, the 3000 mechs successfully shattered the first wave. The cost, on the other hand, was miserable, as the men were completely engulfed by the flocks of aggressive carnivores in no time, whose mechs were mostly crushed before breakthrough even happened, while the surviving mechs would be very unlikely to come back in one piece.

The 3000 souls and machineries did not go to a waste however. The frontline commanders got their intention fairly quick, as the frontline seized this golden opportunity, sending their 2000 mechs to the top atmosphere next to squash these Steelbats in the cage they created themselves. The Steelbats outside carried on joining the cramped party, and they could barely lift their claw to give a scratch.

The 2000 mechs occupied the space quickly, they then broke into little flocks, few hundreds of them began soaring around, like a combat order. The speeding Collisions soon caused invisible slice attacks, like the blade of a blending machine, which the Steelbats would be completely dissected upon contact. The aids were also waiting for further command at the lower atmosphere.

Steelbats were harmless without their speed. There were a few managed to squeeze themselves out of the web, their fate was cruel however, as a handful of compression explosives tossed by experts shall await. Boom! Splash! The flying beast would become falling rain.

The villagers on the ground were feeling underwhelmed though, as there were hardly time where the Steelbats actually escaped

their grip. So most of the villagers armed themselves with weapons made out of Lavagold, eagerly waiting for the falling Steelbats from the sky to give those nasty animals the final cut.

The spawn rate of Steelbats was too great. It felt like an endless war.

Hush... Hush.... Zoom! A queue of mechs forced out of the lump! And the escaped had spotted Sang Huo's mech at the topmost atmosphere as they sped towards him. The lump of darkness continued tumbling below them. There were also a tiny few of lone bats but those showed ignorance towards Sang Huo and his escaped brothers.

Sang Huo estimated... out of 3000 mechs, only 200 mates or so had survived. It was heart wrenching. He could feel the grief choking his breath. And they were actually armed and seated in a mech, imagine without the teacher's help, the tribe would have been a goner.

Well, at least we have survivors.

The lump of darkness was covering almost everything that could sign him direction. Sang Huo seriously was no longer able to find the location of his village.

They could still survive even if they had to live in the mech for the following days, as long as the Steelbats would continue ignoring them. They were supplied with food, made out of Twinkleblue extraction by Dr. Sang Ru Bei which Ye Chong once complimented to be as powerful as the nutrition capsules outside.

Sang Huo first flew forward, the remaining followed him on the runaway at a loss of idea, as they flew on in their own formation.

The Steelbats in their giant flock retained their aggression, as if on steroids, and every following wave was the most impulsive from them, that Sang Tie and his mates of the Explosives Team would have to tame those flies with compression explosives.

The Sang's territory was guarded, no doubt, but the mortality rate carried on rolling, so as the visiting Steelbats. It was a long fight, that it would take more than 10,000 words to write even as summary.

It had been more than 20 days, the migration still continued, and Ye Chong felt his iron nerves would snap at any second, while Sang Pu was also dispirited. The Steelbats were ever-aggressive, they seemed to have tossed their biological clock away the moment they left their nest. The Sangs were on shift, and every shift was a consuming trip, as they flew up and down, getting so worn out that they could sleep the moment the fresh breeze of the outside hit their eyelids.

Like seriously, which pilot would have a battle more than 2 hours? Which author would write a war scene on a single chapter that seems to last forever? It would drive people mad! Under such tension, such density, such aggression of enemies!

The mortality rate was rolling faster when shift happened. Sang Pu felt his heart aching at first, but fortunately as people got used to the constantly irritating process of going ups and downs, no-tension to tension, back and fro, the mortality rate slowed down.

Throughout the 20 days of high density training, the Sang villagers had transformed as they had grasped the Collision utterly. They knew the machinery so well like the back of their hands, and Ye Chong was fascinated by their self-learned capabilities.

Speaking of Ye Chong, being the dark knight, of course he would not be the spectator the whole time!

Han Jia's blades were slicing through the approaching Steelbats silently. It had always been a sudden fall of a few Steelbats to the ground, and the villagers who were planning to charge upon the birds - to their horror - realized one giant cut right on the neck.

"Ming my child, look. Sir is a slaughter-man. One painless slice

and it's done. Sir is the real expert, sighs, when would we get to this standard?" Sighed one villager.

"Don't worry, you will. IN, YOUR, DREAM. I mean... we call him 'Sir' for a reason. He's a superlative figure, whom little folks like you and me could ever imitate. But well, I guess Pu and Tie those big boys could have some hope." The other villager was such a bitter tongue.

"Right... Pu and Tie were indeed the best in our village. But I personally think Fan would be the greatest of them all, since you know, he's the student of Sir himself. He learned how to make mechs with Sir, you could see his achievement very much sooner. Sighs, why am I not the chosen one back then?" The villager was feeling upset.

"I have to agree. This boney mech was sure something, even the lord of all beasts, those disgusting Steelbats could not stand against it. If it wasn't Sir, I guess the Sang would no longer exist. The Steelbats... man, they are the demon..."

"I know right...", sympathetically the villager approved the bitter-tongued.

Ye Chong was certainly more experienced than the villagers, also on a different style too. Unlike the Collisions which sped to roll, Ye Chong would only need consecutive quick blinks to assassinate his targets.

But the war had slowly changed him. A hand-on-hand battle was still the best strategy to improvise. He had enough with fancy, flashy moves against these primitives, his movements had grown simplified, his sensibility of space and strength, like to Sangs, had also improved. He also gained one precious ability - the sense of timing, which was often neglected by the people outside, including himself in the past.

He would be facing countless strikes every minute, he always was fighting a one against millions, and those were the reason he got to

pick the timing. Ever since that realization, his output efficiency doubled. Sensibility of timing was a tricky thing to master, as not only difficult to word, but also difficult to comprehend, but Ye Chong did it, coincidentally on this occasion.

A technique truly exclusive to Ye Chong.

And he had also learned the power of group cooperation. He had been the lone ranger, the Solo-man, he thought he would suffice but then he witnessed what the Sangs were capable of once they got into group. So an urge to learn about that kindled inside him.

He wished to learn that and without much time longer he actually did it... at minimum output though. He still lacked that essential rapport with the villagers, which was a headache to begin with. Moreover, the villagers had been treasuring so much that he would be enveloped at the very inside. He did voice his thoughts but the words never got through. And he even got his kill stolen, at one time, finally one escaped Steelbat, he zapped towards it, going to raise his blades. And... hundreds of Collision shredded the beast.

It was as if a shout from the villagers - We Shall Protect You Sir! Touching but also... well...

On the 23rd day, yes, finally the density of the darkness decreased, everything was pumped again. The day before this, the villagers had actually started losing patience, wondering when the hell the epilogue would happen for once. It was so discouraging that if it was not their discipline, they might have tossed their spears and gone underground for the following generations perhaps.

Ye Chong was calling it a miracle, that they could last this long.

It was ending at least.

Ironically, the following wave was so intense that as if the Steelbats, after their diminishing appearance, were shouting out to the villagers, "Just Kidding!"

Chapter 280: Hai Lian

Hai Lian took a glance at the Gigada*, a smug glee rose upon his lips. The Gigada seemed to be utterly exhausted and probably in only a matter of 5 minutes, it would be dead, right in his hand. Piloting "Moonlight" his loving steed, he performed a few sets of standard dodging moves in leisure. The movement of Moonlight was graceful and light, as it constantly fired dazzling gleam from its V-type Beam Shooter, making one hole after another on the body of Gigada.

The body of Gigada was full of pores, as moving slower over the time it was, its greenish eyes were expressing deepest grief.

Zzzt! One final beam hit right between its eyes accurately. Thump! The gigantic insect rolled over its body and passed away. The greenish eyes took one last glance at the sky as they lost the glow after.

Sigh! Shook Hai Lian, only if I have a Recursion, knocking out this thing would never take this long. I do believe in my marksmanship but a Recursion was something I might get... in my dream that is. Furthermore, there has hardly been an actual Recursion in the market, no joke, it's super rare!

The Recursion had always been the weaponry exclusive to the Xue Lai clan, which annually only a limited number of them would be flowed to the market - truly a thing with demand yet without supply. No one would have access to it even armed with ample cash and points, other than the Aristocrats themselves. And well, I am just an ordinary folk of nowhere, I should stop thinking about it. Hah! Serves me right that I actually refused to join the Aristocrats myself. Teased Hai Lian, he felt like hurling more insults on himself.

Well, the man was still proud of his achievement as he beamed at the dead Gigada on the ground. He knew, there was not many of

them who was able to pilot their way into the calamitous asteroid belt while being able to hunt down an actual Gigada alive. The Gigada could go for a fortune in the market, hah! This was more than enough for a better, more advanced mech! Overjoyed Hai Lian was, for he got a valuable loot. The Gigada was a nasty challenge to handle, not because of its defense or whatsoever, rather it was its murdering offenses and speed, which could take out pilots quickly. Moreover its environment was the deadliest asteroid belt of history of humankind so not many pilots could be as out-of-their-mind as Hai Lian to come here.

Hai Lian had been here for literally three years and the current spot he slaughtered a Gigada was the deepest he could have ventured at the moment. He dared not to go deeper with his equipments. He hoped that after getting a better mech, he would have the capability to get into the next unknown. His curiosity was rising.

Being a freelance hunter over the course of 3 years, Hai Lian was actually quite well-known in his circle but he was the low-profiled kind of person so not many people would witness him in action. Still, a handful of Aristocrats found him, they even handed over a formal invitation to their alliance, which every of them was given a polite decline without fail.

He adored the freedom, his spirit was for the adventure. Yes, certainly his life would improve dramatically once he laid his thumb on the contract with one of the Aristocrats but he would have to give his freedom away as he lived under the whim of the others, which was unbearably horrifying as he thought in the wild now.

Moonlight bowed down, was going to pick up the Gigada's body. It was then...

Hssssssssssssk!

A strange cry was heard.

A never-before-heard strange cry was discerned. Was it a new kind of beast I have never met before? Alarmed Hai Lian, knowing the fact that every beast in the asteroid belt survived for a reason and for that reason he had drained half of his stamina of the day to kill a Gigada. Moonlight was hitting red as well, he would be doomed if another beast arrived!

The cry seemed to be coming from the depth of the belt.

Hsssssssssssssssk!

An unknown beast deep inside the asteroid belt, crying in a language he wished not to comprehend, his mind was urging him to turn back, run and run fast!

He took a quick glance at the screen. Wait, what? There was nothing on the screen? Impossible! I know my Moonlight was not that advanced of a model! But it is at least a mid-tier model! The detection system is all stable and impeccable! It would not be disturbed by most waves and it had been giving accurate reading the whole time! But, b-b-but, why?!

Hsssssssssssssssssssk!

The cry was getting louder, it felt like something was slicing through the air.

Okay, there has to be something! Judged Hai Lian right away, although his sight was convincing him otherwise. The screen was empty, emptier than ever. No, no no... Fear crawled upon every inch of his skin. Okay! He got it, he knew what to do, he gave a tap on the screen and switched to Photon detection mode.

Hsssssssssssk!

He went dumbfounded upon seeing the visual.

What in the solar system is this?

In the boundless sky, countless monsters gleaming in a variety of colors were heading towards him at a horrifying rate. Their bodies

were narrow and long, as their bodies seemed to be installed with 4 strange blades? Those were supposed to be wings but the fact that they were well-polished convinced Hai Lian enough to call them blades. There was a spear at the top?

So what animal is this?

Chill ran down to his spines upon seeing the dense lump of monsters approaching.

He was too stunned to run, the beasts were too fast. He recognized the speed of Moonlight even though its performance was a little subpar on the other aspects. At least Moonlight could travel faster than most mid-tiers mech, which was the main reason why he got the bravery to venture into the asteroid belt. But, Moonlight was hardly speedy in front of these beasts.

I'm done. I just am. Hai Lian's face was colorlessly grey.

The beasts were as barbaric as they appeared to be. The scary part was, these beasts actually knew humane tactics in war!

Good bye, cruel world. He closed his eyes, awaiting his death. He would not buy the story that there would be any civilized entity in the murdering asteroid belt, especially when experience taught him that, those which stayed deeper in the belt would be the more brutal.

...

... ..

He waited since forever yet the immense pain, the deadly shriek did not occur, not at all.

In tension he slowly opened his eyes. The scene before him was going beyond his understanding. The strange beasts surrounded him but there was not any attack from them. Knowing that he was surely a done-for, he actually calmed down and took a closer look at these monsters.

The surrounding monsters suddenly rearranged themselves, opening up a way where by then the commander - Hai Lian presumed - came into the scene. Wait what? Hai Lian could feel his eyeballs popping out in disbelief. Did he see a mech flying into the scene?

It's a mech? A MECH? The leader of these beasts was a mech? He thought he was bright enough to understand all situation, but he no longer felt his brain working by then.

"You have been captured." The cold voice rang, which feared Hai Lian to the corner.

And that... was how Hai Lian became the captured of these beasts. Confused, Hai Lian watched on, his heart skipped a beat upon seeing a man coming out of these monsters. Okay, that is enough intergalactic travel today. He had seen enough strange things, he seriously hoped to call it a day now. He could imagine him getting a heart attack if this carried on for the next few days.

So, the bloody-sounded tale of human coming out of a beast's body was actually the army of the Sang villagers, and Ye Chong.

The migration attack from the Steelbats had been successfully overcome, although the last few waves for the past 5 days were manic from the Steelbats themselves, which were consuming. Even Ye Chong had to jump into action with his Han Jia. The compression explosives were extremely helpful either as the remaining Sangs on the ground were able to blow up a hole in the lump of darkness without even the need to aim, they just had to make sure there was not any of their ally nearby.

The battle for survival that lasted for almost 30 days had come to an end. Report had also arrived, stating mortality of 5000 men, with the first day having the most of them, the 3000 men in the first wave of attack especially. The villagers were joyful at first, then tears began streaming down everyone's cheek. That was a major loss to the village. Fortunately, Sang Huo and his 300 men

who made it back safely had brought a happy surprise to everyone.

Sang Huo and his men had once travelled deep into the Archipelago. The area which was once habituated by the Steelbats had been deserted, and they discovered a rich source of mildstone as well as Lavagold. The villagers raised their brows upon hearing the report since both milestone and Lavagold had both become important resources for their living. The chief immediately sent an order to find a spot where the villagers could reside with defense.

The additional surprise was the fact that they found out a large number of caves, which also happened to be interconnected too! By a glance, the caves should be sufficient to accommodate easily over few hundred thousands of residents. It was a happy news indeed as having a shelter within the hollows would be safer in a dangerous place like Archipelago. The Steelbats would fail to nail them if they ever returned again!

They had a discussion. In the end, the chief decided to perform a migration.

Ye Chong followed the Sang and arrived by the cave and it appeared to be a house of treasure! Minerals were everywhere, which tons of them were new to Ye Chong! The Steelbats had been residing here for years, as justified by the scattered remnants of their ancestors. The soil was enriched by their feces, perfect for Twinkleblue plantation. And there were also a few gravity regions nearby, where the villagers could culture more Portabella!

The Sangs felt highly optimistic of their future. With Collision and Compression Explosives, plus a strategically located home, they would be safe, safer than ever.

Moreover, the next migration of the Steelbats would be a matter of two centuries later. The beast stampede was a headache though for it seemed to have wiped out every beast nearby. So they would face a major shortage of meat in considerable amount of time. At least they had a plantation of Twinkleblues now, so they would not

actually starve badly. With Collisions they could reach hunting grounds farther than before.

After the hustles and bustles of migration, the Sang Family Village had once again regained its tranquility.

During this period Ye Chong had actually achieved a few things - he had improved compression explosives, where they blew harder than before; he also enhanced the efficiency of utilization of mildstone's energy in the Destiny: Simplified version; he made miniature engines out of skeletons to create an actual compression missile, which travelled far and hit great, though it lacked a lock-on system, the accuracy was a little bit goofy. Nevertheless, Ye Chong did make use of this weakness in the end, he decided to design it into a more area-of-effect kind of explosive. He modified Collisions and added cartridge to launch the missiles.

The skeletal resources were adored by Ye Chong the artisan, that he even once planned to make a new Han Jia out of them. Sadly Han Jia was a complexity compared to Collision, without advanced apparatuses Ye Chong could hardly make a move.

Ye Chong headed to the chief and mentioned his first request upon completion of these improvements. And without hesitation, the old chief gave Ye Chong 5000 men as requested, of those who happened to be the greatest fighters. Most of them volunteered themselves though, like Sang Pu, Sang Ling, Sang Tie, Sang Huo and Sang Fan, then the apprentices of Ye Chong. Lastly Ye Chong only picked Sang Fan and 6 other apprentices nonetheless. And the large pack of the others was ordered to remain in the village.

5000 Collisions supplied with sufficient mildstone and food commenced their adventure under the leadership of Ye Chong. Ye Chong could not judge what had happened to Mu Shang and the other members but this would be what he could do the most...

The Collisions zoomed into the Red Sea and performed a careful search. As expected, the red strands were doing nothing to the

skeleton mechs, which were smooth-sailing without worry. Ye Chong was astonished by the fact that the Sangs possessed a great sense of direction in this, that would really explain their capability to cope with the tension in the cage of the Steelbats back then, they needed no tool to tell them where they were heading.

They searched the Red Sea, but they could not find any sign of the Coxcomb. There was also nothing that could be associated with Mu Shang. Ye Chong, the indifferent one, was literally feeling demotivated.

The Collisions were the perfect transportation to conquer the Red Sea, as not only they were unaffected by the delay effects, their blades were also able to cut through the strands easily, which eventually Ye Chong had a huge chunk of red strand collection in his inventory.

Ye Chong and the men travelled from one end to another. Ye Chong was venturing into this unexplored zone. With Collisions the Sangs now possessed the ability of long-distance migration. The Archipelago was frankly not the best spot for the expansion of their tribe. It would be great if they could discover a better place to live, that their tribe would once again strengthen back to their glory.

Ye Chong was feeling down. Mu Shang remained undiscovered. He sighed as he could do nothing else than holding up the search for the moment. Since he lacked a path to return, his only option would be to live with the Sangs. Ye Chong was certainly glad to be able to help the Sangs with what he knew. He was growing on the tribe, it would a big fat lie if he claimed to have no feeling for them after what they had gone through together. He too hoped that the Sangs would live better.

Well, unexpectedly, before the search at the belt was done, they met Hai Lian.

And everybody knew what it would mean if a mech appeared

here.

Chapter 281: He Yue Galaxy

Hai Lian was very annoyed indeed. Man I sure have tough luck. I thought I was lucky enough to have hunted a Gigada for money and now I am a slave under some unknown tribe's capture. Bravo, Hai Lian, you saved the day.

But he must admit, he nearly dropped his jaws upon seeing the mech of the leader.

Skeleton mech? Am I seeing things? Is that really a skeleton mech? Oh my gosh... I actually witness the legendary mech with my own eyes. Yes, some may argue that skeleton mech isn't really the strongest, but I am convinced the fact that the mech represents the top of a certain field, a master craftsmanship. As far as I know, almost every aristocrat who came to me mentioned about their research on skeleton mechs, though I have yet heard any successful attempt from them.

So who exactly are these people? Hai Lian was shocked, he could imagine and he swore that, if this information was leaked to the outside world, it would send fire to all the medias of the entire galaxy.

These flying "objects" were looking odd to Hai Lian on the other hand, although his instinct told him to not look down upon them. As a freelancing hunter he had been talking to the beasts with his fist, so he was rather familiar with the skeletons. These flying objects must be formidable in some way as he had heard about stories of a person massively purchasing skeletons in the market back then, and as far as he eavesdropped, these materials seemed to be used for production of skeleton parts.

And at the black market of Nine Gates, there was a batch of skeleton parts quietly flowed into the market once. Almost every piece of them was astronomically priced. That was the first time an actual piece of skeleton part appeared in the eyes of humanity,

different from its theoretical debut back then. Even though those were merely skeleton accessories, they had once again rekindled the interests of humanity towards skeleton crafts, which led to an inflation at the market. Hai Lian probably benefited from it the most. As a hunter he had a storage of skeletons, he could feel that happiness of his wallet exploding, the figure on his identity card ticking endlessly back then.

A few pieces of accessories were enough to stir up a rampage in the market. Now, imagine they saw a complete skeleton mech in front of them. I wonder how they would react? Maybe like the thrashing during the time when Galacly Gaga appeared. Hai Lian was pretty looking forward to it.

Of course such thought was merely a whim rolling in his head. He would never word it. He expected himself to express full respect towards this very leader of the strange tribe., especially when he could feel pierced by the leader's cold gaze. The leader's brows laid flat like his tone. It was a fear to overcome for him to lay his eyes upon the leader.

These were some horrible barbarians. It must be the hidden troops trained by one of the aristocrats! I could tell from every gesture they made, okay, I am getting scared. I started to lose track of the happening, I could not really tell which aristocrat could own such major troops, other than the greatest three - Xue Lai clan, the Ye family, the Xi Feng Tribe, but it would not make sense! None of those aristocrats possess a skeleton mech!

And there were skeleton flying objects. 5000 of them! Such a budget! Seriously no other aristocrat could invest such a fortune. The colors though... those were contradicting my assumption. As far as I know, the Xue Lai clan adores the color white, whereas the Ye family prefers the color black and the Xi Feng tribe has a thing for green. Those colors also happen to be the representation of the three aristocrats, which they would use to paint their mechs. But these skeleton flying objects were a mess! They do not have a

standard color, it felt like I was caught by a group of underperforming troops or something! There are all sorts of colors, and some of them are even painted in patches of green and red, like a poorly done reskined mech from the wet market. Yet... their behaviors were showing otherwise. They are solemn and stern, with convincing discipline. Anyone with eyes could tell they had undergone a long period of military training.

Those eyes though, were very frightening to my sense. They were still, like too still, forceful which sometimes a glare of their shrunken pupils would make my heart run cold. Archipelago is known to be the most tedious place for humanity yet these men... these Sang villagers I heard? They survived from the slaughters from generation to generation. I also heard they had a severe war with Steelbats days ago, I know those Steelbats, they were terrifying, how in the Archipelago they handled the uncontrolled avifauna?

Ye Chong and the tribe were not really aware of this so-called frightening stares and aura, it probably was a lingering fearsomeness because of the war back then. But it was enough to give a mind crush to Hai Lian.

Okay, obviously, Hai Lian, these men were not the kind civilized one you would have expected. Yikes! Those stares! Stop it!

In reality, it was all Hai Lian's imagination. The entire tribe surrounded him as he was the first new outsider after the teacher's arrival. No doubt they would be all alarmed and curious.

Hey! Hey! What do you want to do with me? Where do you want me to go?

Hai Lian was called to the side by Ye Chong.

"What exactly is this place?" asked Ye Chong.

Dammit you Archipelagoose! Quit playing games with me! If you want to tease your enemy, do it properly! I had never felt so

insulted in my entire life! Do you think I'm a fool? If there was anybody in the galaxy who claimed to be unaware of the Calamitous Asteroid Belt, I would be piloting my mech and - with pleasure - crashed my head right into that fella! You Archipelagoose! Try playing games with me again and you- "This place, sir, is known as the Calamitous Asteroid Belt." Stated Hai Lian with wholehearted courtesy.

It was not the first day Hai Lian went on his little adventure, he would never show his true dissatisfaction to an enemy with fearsome appearance.

Ye Chong was finding the name pretty foreign. He tried searching the term in his mind - nope, no result. "So what galaxy are we in exactly?" asked he again.

I said stop playing games with me! Ughhhh! There's a reason I call you an Archipelagoose you twerp! I swear I am going to- "This, sir, is known as the He Yue galaxy."

"He Yue... what?" Flinched Ye Chong, the name rang a bell. But... He Yue galaxy was not from any of the 5 major galaxies...

"Mister, did you just mention He Yue galaxy? We are in He Yue galaxy?" Sang Pu, alarmed, asked frantically, which was intriguing to Ye Chong as Sang Pu had been all calm and steady till this statement toppled his rationality.

"Duh! Where else? The Blackhole?" responded Hai Lian, on a leak of his temper. Well, you love games, don't you? Just carry on messing with my mind, come on. Wait, what did I just say? Oh no... dear Hai Lian, you know that your life was still in their hands, don't you?

"He Yue galaxy? He Yue galaxy...", muttered Sang Pu, "Oh my lord, is this true? We had actually found our root a long time ago?" The villagers were stupefied.

And only Ye Chong recalled by then, the ancestor of the Sang

tribe once migrated from He Yue galaxy to Archipelago. All these while he had been assuming the He Yue galaxy being an old name of one galaxy of the current 5 major galaxies. But now this man's statement seemed to be telling otherwise. So there was actually another galaxy than the 5 major galaxies?

Hai Lian stared at these men, confused. Their expression seemed to be joyful but not really at the same time... they did not seem to be acting though. Are they really not from He Yue? I clearly heard that mature man mentioning about He Yue being their root... so ... maybe...

"How far is He Yue from the 5 major galaxies?" Ye Chong was more concerned on this.

"Five what? What Five major galaxies?" Hai Lian was looking at Ye Chong in bewilderment.

Aha! My hypothesis was right! I knew it! These men are not from He Yue at all! But assuming they really were from He Yue, probably they are some hidden elite troops trained by the aristocrat, who ventured into the Calamitous Asteroid Belt and disguised their transportation with camouflage. They should be on some kind of top secret mission, oh no, and I actually butted in. To keep the mission as a secret, they would have to kill me!!!

Luckily, Hai Lian, they were not from He Yue. Phew, I could finally flex my muscles. But frankly speaking, I am really curious of their origin. Man, I'm such a chicken at this, I could not even lift my mouth and ask. I guess, for now I should be as cooperative as possible.

Sang Pu was truly the successor to the leader, he regained his thoughts quickly and began inquiring more details of He Yue. He was more sensible in this than Ye Chong.

Of course Hai Lian was fully cooperative, answering those inquiries without hesitation.

Apparently, He Yue galaxy did not have its own government. It was currently torn between forces. It was complicated as not only there were numerous forces but also a vast number of freelancing hunting pilots joining and forming different forces at the same time, truly chaotic. And among them, the three great aristocrats were most outstanding - Xue Lai clan, Ye family, Xi Feng tribe, with their advancement in technologies as well as great battle capabilities. The catch was, these aristocrats, other than being in their respective region, were not as influential as the people outside would imagine.

Sang Pu was all ears, and he asked a few questions from time to time.

"Thank you very much," sighed Hai Lian in a relief upon hearing the loving phrase. His wit suggested the fact that these men indeed lacked even the basic understanding of He Yue galaxy. They surely would need a guide.

Well that sounds like my safety charm! Sigh! Goodbye freedom, Hai Lian, you are eventually a bird trapped in the cage. It's easy to say no right in the face of those pampered Aristocrats, but these are the barbarians, they would grind me for dinner if I dare to even shake my head!

In his galaxy, the outside world, none of those forces would suppress the freelancing pilots. In He Yue certainly, the greatest force consisted of the freelancing pilots like Hai Lian, since they easily outnumbered the 3 Aristocrats, which justified the fact that Hai Lian was still standing there under captive despite all the snobbish "No" he rubbed on the faces of those Aristocrats.

But obviously these barbarians would never understand the fact that I'm an endangered species. Hai Lian you would be an ignorant bull if you would die simply because of a "No".

Sang Pu then asked his men to lead Hai Lian to somewhere else after the interrogation.

"So, what do we do next? Should we migrate again? Ask all our brothers and sisters to go back to our root?" They then had a discussion.

"Sir, how do you see?" asked Sang Pu, with his expression as passionate as the folks by his side. It had to be the greatest wish for the Sangs to return to He Yue galaxy, especially when it was near.

"We could think about that later. We have no idea how the place here looks," declined Ye Chong. "Bringing everyone out could become an issue easily. We should scout the place first, then we build a base, we would consider about the migration after all the conditions had been met. Well, for now you could go back and spread the happy news to everybody at least."

Ye Chong might not be the most charismatic leader yet, but his decision-making was more mature than before.

"True, sir!" His idea was approved by everybody. Their tribe had been staying in the Archipelago for generations, they had hardly seen the outside world, and only Ye Chong had the actual societal experience, so, one would of course listen to the experienced.

"Go! Go and tell them we found home!" Sang Pu sent 10 men to spread the words.

Ye Chong began pondering, as he confirmed the fact that there were indeed more galaxies beyond the 5 major galaxies, judging from the words of Hai Lian. A complete zone of foreignness...

Ye Chong began wondering if Mu Shang might happen to be there with the Coxcomb. He discarded the idea quickly however, as he realized the probability was too measly for that to happen. The figure would further decrease assuming he would go on a search boldly at this foreign world.

Only if they were lost in the 5 major galaxies. Ye Chong would be sure of what to do. He just had to log into the Virtual World and let Mu discover and trace his energy signal.

Will I see Mu Shang again?? Sighed Ye Chong in his mind.

But first, I have better things to do. I should at least ensure my survival to even be able to meet them again. I knew nothing else than the hand-on-hand, I got to learn.

I start to miss Shang's overindulgence, at least Shang's superior knowledge and diabolic nature would be close to my capabilities. The others... well they needed my help more... Helplessly Ye Chong took the flag of leadership, since that seemed to be the most probable move to make for now.

Luckily we got a tour guide.

"Bring Hai Lian."

"Yes sir."

Ye Chong called Hai Lian to the front and mentioned his request.

As expected! Thought Hai Lian, not like I have any choice though. So the free-unfree hunter accepted the request without much hesitation.

Ye Chong, suddenly had Shang's voice echoed in his mind, "Remember, Ye, whenever the enemies agreed to your need, you should return the favor. Fair trade is fair. It's a principle of life." Well then...

"Since you have accepted our request, similarly, as a fair trade, we would pay you with a price accordingly. So, tell us, what do you wish for?" The principle of life is the very basic law of human interaction, emphasized Shang. Even though Ye Chong could not guarantee to when and what extend he would abide by that principle, he would at least try learning it, since he was in fact the one sitting on the throne leading the people at the moment.

Sang Pu and his men were looking at Sir oddly, as they believed the so-called price was unnecessary at all, since any resource in Archipelago would be as precious as a living necessity, plus Hai Lian had technically been enslaved by them, whatever he had

performed should be unwaged.

An inexperienced beast leading a group of incomprehensible beasts - the best summary it was for Ye Chong's current team perhaps.

A joyful twist in Hai Lian's show. It looked like his script did not end just there, since there was no need for a fill-in-the-blank promise in this scene! Such a charismatic man! Complimented Hai Lian. But well, the hunter's mind schemed faster than the wind, as he said, "Thank you sir for your greatest kindness, however it would be more helpful if I could know what the lord could offer at his convenience..."

Chapter 282: A Terrified Hai Lian

Ye Chong blinked. He was caught off guard. As it was, everyone on his side had no money at all, not even a single zuan. Nonetheless, Ye Chong was not embarrassed over it. He never really thought highly of money, and being penniless was absolutely normal for him. Ye Chong replied, "Hmm, we have no money. But, if you're interested in that, we'll need time to pay you." Mu and Shang had told him before, that almost everyone would be interested in money.

Hai Lian looked at the man before him, and felt like he could not understand him at all. He had just told him that they were broke without any embarrassment, like he was only talking about the weather.

Hai Lian spoke more respectfully, "I'm not too keen on money. If possible, please give me a full-skeleton mech, and I'll be most grateful." Someone as weathered as Hai Lian would know not to offer too low a price, so that there was room for negotiation.

A full-skeleton mech. Ye Chong quietly sighed in relief. To him, it was not too difficult. Ye Chong nodded. "Alright then. However, we didn't bring any extra full-skeleton mechs. For a new full-skeleton mech, we'll need some time to deliver." It would take time, whether it was building a new one from scratch, or getting one from the Sang Family Village.

"No problem," Hai Lian answered quickly, afraid that Ye Chong might take back his word. Heavens, he never thought Ye Chong would actually agree to it. To him, a full-skeleton mech would more than satisfy him, and now the man had actually agreed without hesitation. He could almost jump with joy.

He would risk his life for a full-skeleton mech, much less waiting for awhile. Besides, the other man seemed honest enough. More importantly, he understood his position in this negotiation.

The thought of having a full-skeleton mech was euphoric. Hai Lian almost fainted with joy. What's in a full-skeleton mech? If someone were to offer a full-skeleton mech as a reward when hiring a freelance mech pilot, Hai Lian was sure that many would jump at the offer. An excellent mech to a mech pilot was like a finely honed sword to a swordsman, or a beauty to a playboy; besides, this was a full-skeleton mech!

The turn from downright miserable to absolute joy was like a dream to Hai Lian. He could feel himself enveloped in a dreamy sensation of happiness. Fortunately, the full-skeleton mech was only promised to him. If they were to present him with a full-skeleton mech there and then, Hai Lian thought he would probably faint on the spot.

"Since you've agreed, then let's talk about how to make things work between us." Ye Chong's voice broke Hai Lian's reverie. Hai Lian finally came to, and remembered then that the mech would come at a price.

"Just let me know what I can do for you, sir!" With the full-skeleton mech as price, Hai Lian submitted unreservedly to provide his services.

Ye Chong continued evenly, "Hmm, we're not asking for much, other than that you work as a reliable guide for us. On the other hand, don't try to look into our background, and don't tell anyone about us. Any action on your part must go through my approval. Oh, right, and another thing, I'll leave the matter of our identification documents to you."

Hai Lian nodded as he listened. The job was not too difficult, reasonable even. Sang Pu and the rest listened on the side as well. The outside world was too unfamiliar to them.

Ye Chong took a glance at the villagers and continued, "What we have to do now is to stay low, our safety is top priority. All your plans must be based on this." He then turned to look at Sang Pu

and the others and said, "The same goes for all of you."

"Yes sir," Sang Pu and the rest bowed, answering in unison.

Hai Lian looked respectfully at Ye Chong. He could not understand how a young man like him could command such respect from these people. Hai Lian himself was impressed by the discipline that this group had demonstrated. He was sure that, with the exception of the three main aristocratic families, no one in the He Yue galaxy could come close to this attitude.

Ye Chong took a casual glance at Hai Lian and said, "Since we have an agreement, I hope you'll do your part. If you turn back on the deal, you should know the consequences to that, I'm sure."

Hai Lian could feel cold sweat rolling down along his back, down to the tip of his spine. There was a deep chill spreading from the depths of his heart. Ye Chong's casual sentence came out like a blizzard.

Hai Lian quickly replied, "Don't worry, sir, I will do my best." He was moaning regretfully on the inside. The full-skeleton mech will not come easy, indeed.

Sang Pu, Sang Fan and the others quickly passed the word from Ye Chong to the rest. The Sang family members were all used to hunting, and had lived under the laws of nature. No one understood better than Ye Chong what disaster they would cause once they stepped into human society, since he had done it before himself.

Looking back at those days, he would not have survived without Mu and Shang. His own journey was not all stars and glory, but littered with a good many deadly battles.

Human society was too complicated. He was still continually vexed by it. Once, he would leave such problems for Mu and Shang to worry about; now, it was up to him to solve their predicament. Moreover, it was not just him now, but a whole 5,000 Sang family

villagers. He must take every step with the utmost care.

While Ye Chong was not familiar with this kind of problem, he was at least able to calculate the best solution, out of influence from Mu. The order he just gave was based on his considerations of the situation at hand.

The only ones in the world whom Ye Chong would sacrifice so much for would be Mu and Shang, but this did not mean that Ye Chong would act irresponsibly. He would do his best to protect the 5,000 Sang family members, even if he would not die for them.

Ye Chong asked, "Are you familiar with this place?"

Hai Lian nodded. "Yes, I've been around for years."

"Are there many visitors?" Ye Chong asked.

Hai Lian shook his head. "Not many. The wild animals here are nasty things, plus the land is difficult to travel. Aside from independent hunters, and mech pilots here for actual combat training, no one really comes here."

Ye Chong was satisfied with that, since it greatly reduced the probability of the Sang family members being found out. Having 5,000 people suddenly visiting a city would have been big news, much less when they all looked vicious as hell.

"Is there any hidden place around here, big enough to fit 5,000 people?" Ye Chong asked.

5,000 people ... Hai Lian was shocked. He thought there would only be around two to three thousand, but now ... Keeping himself composed, he pondered over the question for a moment before replying, "Hmm, there's a valley nearby, very much hidden, and spacious. I think it should be big enough for 5,000 people. It's just that there are many wild beasts there, very vicious ones. I've only been there once, and nearly lost my life." Hai Lian spoke of his experience at the valley with lingering fear.

Wild beasts? Ye Chong believed that no animal would be more

vicious than the ones at Archipelago. Animals that lived with such strong gravity would be so much more dangerous than the animals here.

"Gather them up," Ye Chong spoke with a plain but undefiable voice. He was beginning to accept and play the role of a leader. He was the perfect case study of a leader made, not born.

Sang Ling bowed, and did as commanded.

The Sang tribe was efficient. Even without communication devices, they still managed to work with such efficiency.

The 5,000-strong battalion stood in formation with a silent, imposing manner.

"There's a valley nearby. We'll have to clear the area of wild beasts. Sang Pu will lead the operation." Ye Chong had no idea how to give orders, and only spoke in his usual way.

"Yes sir," All 5,000 of them answered.

Hai Lian was pale, watching the events unfolding before him. Ye Chong's seemingly unleaderly order had transformed the 5,000 people into formidable warriors. If those 5,000 people were like a sword in its sheath earlier, then Ye Chong's order seemed to have unsheathed the sword.

The 5,000 strong formation did not move, and everyone's expression was still as sombre as before, but now, one could feel the strong, deadly aura from them. Hai Lian had never seen anything like it, and was hence pale from fear.

"As expected, they're killers," Hai Lian thought to himself. A friend once told him that this steady but deadly aura would only come from people who had have survived countless battles to the death. However, He Yue had never seen war for years. Why would there be veteran soldiers here? And why would there be 5,000 of them?

Where did they come from? That was the main question for Hai

Lian. However, he was also well aware of the situation, and would not risk his life for the answer.

Under Hai Lian's guidance, Ye Chong and the rest quickly found the valley.

However, what happened next shocked Hai Lian once again, till his face was drained of blood.

This .. This was a massacre! Heavens, who were these people? He had nearly lost his life here, but now the beasts were killed so easily that he was having a hard time to even breathe, taking in the spectacle.

He had seen so-called infamous mech pilot squads working, but they were like child's play compared to what he was seeing now. He dared not record it, though. If he did, he was sure that their performance would cause an uproar in the world, and the cooperation they demonstrated would be a welcome addition into the curriculum for mech pilot group strategies as a case study.

That odd-shaped flying machine was packed with such destructive powers that Hai Lian himself could freeze in fear. The valley was scattered with blood everywhere. He could hear the animals howling in fear and pain. Their savage methods were enough to make even someone as weathered as him to squirm.

Even the Ye family, known for their savage ways in this galaxy, could not compare to this battalion. The Ye family preferred close range combat, but not in the crude and brute force methods of these people, crashing into their enemies without style.

However, the way they worked with each other was intriguing in a way that Hai Lian could not exactly describe. It was like watching a huge, bearded man swinging his two large iron hammers around as he yelled barbarically, but all the while moving gracefully like a dancer. The contrast was mind bending.

The clearing operation went swiftly. Only 500 people were

involved, but their astonishing efficiency would satisfy even the most unyielding critics.

Hai Lian stared at the animal bodies scattered around the area. They could all be sold for money! If all these people decided to start working as freelance hunters, then the other hunters should just choose another line of work.

Ye Chong walked to one of the bodies, took out his dagger and slit open the flesh. He inspected the animal's skeleton, and shook his head. If it were before he entered Archipelago, he would have thought these skeletons were excellent. However, now that Archipelago had raised the bar, he could no longer be satisfied with these skeletons. They were too inferior compared to those from the Archipelago.

Archipelago skeletons were still the best!

Ye Chong's familiar movements and his ease around the bodies made Hai Lian understand that the young man, so respected by the battalion, must have had his own share of a bloody past.

Ye Chong had no idea how to set camp or secure the perimeter, so he left all the work to Sang Pu.

On a deserted plain on Soundfall, a group was advancing swiftly, fast like a falling star.

This was Ye Chong and his people. Once the battalion was settled, and instructions were given, Ye Chong led a team himself to survey the planet known as Soundfall. Together with him was Sang Fan and a few others. Sang Pu was left at base to handle any unexpected situations. Ye Chong's order were for them to stay hidden; if they were spotted, leave no witnesses alive. The order made Hai Lian felt a chill reaching deep to his bones.

Ye Chong took eight people with him. Together with himself and Hai Lian, they made up a group of 10. The eight included Sang Fan

and Sang Ling, and the rest were all elites like Sang Huo and Sang Tie.

Chapter 283: Entering the City

With the exception of Ye Chong and Hai Lian, the rest of them had no dimension keystones for their mechs. Full-skeleton mechs were too much of an attention grabber, and if they entered the city with those mechs, they would be noticed the moment they arrived. Ye Chong knew this from his experience at the Nine Gates of Daylight.

The person left behind to defend the base was Sang Mu. Sang Mu was a socially awkward figure, but in fact he had a quick mind, a typical strategist. He was an excellent fighter, and ruthless enough to be make some of the villagers wary of him. Ye Chong's instructions to him were to protect the mechs, and retaliate where necessary. If their safety was compromised, they were to escape immediately. To Ye Chong, survival was of the utmost importance.

The rest of them were heading towards the nearest city.

Hai Lian was shocked. He never imagined that this lean young guy would be so strong. When he was carried by Sang Tie, the wind blowing in his face made it hard to breathe. He could barely open his eyes as the man ran like the wind. His mind was in circles, and he could not even form a coherent thought!

The eight people advanced in battle formation, surrounding Ye Chong in the center. Soundfall had considerably weaker gravity than at Archipelago. On the other hand, Sang Tie and others were already quite fast on Archipelago. Hence, they moved so fast it was like they were running on engines.

Ye Chong believed that even a Jie expert specializing in running would not be able to outrun them.

With the exception of Ye Chong and Hai Lian, the rest of them wore enthusiastic expressions. They had never experienced weak gravity like this. Every Sang tribe member yearned for greater power, speed and strength. Their heightened abilities here were

unprecedented, so it was only natural that they felt so excited.

Mechs flew past them from above occasionally. There came in all sorts of designs, be it humanoid or animal shaped. Sang Fan and the rest watched with awe, new to the outside world. Even so, they remained in formation and did not slow down.

Their speed was getting a little too conspicuous, as some mechs would hover over them for a while before continuing on their journeys. Soon, Ye Chong realized the issue, and asked for them to slow down. However, even then, they were still running faster than normal.

The city's silhouette came to view in the distance.

After Hai Lian was put down, he took nearly three minutes to recover himself. He then took a look and found the city in view, and was flabbergasted. He turned back to see the group, and found that they did not look strained or even tired at all. Even Sang Tie, who was carrying him, was breathing quite evenly.

Hai Lian gulped heavily, his fear of the group now refreshed. What astonishing stamina! They had actually arrived here on foot! He could not help but think, also, that if they were to go at "it", they could probably go on for days ... He felt a little jealous

No one said anything. The group stayed in battle formation, wearing serious expressions.

However, Hai Lian quickly broke off his lewd thoughts, since he saw Ye Chong looking at him.

Hai Lian quickly spoke up, "That's the city called Foundation, I've been there a few times. The city's under the power of the Kuri tribe. Please beware, the women of the tribe cannot be touched, or there will be trouble."

"The Kuri tribe?" Sang Fan asked. Of all the younger Sang tribe members, only Sang Pu and Sang Fan could behave naturally in front of Ye Chong. Even Sang Ling would become behave more

carefully around Ye Chong in later days.

Hai Lian said, "Yes. The Kuri tribe is more conservative. Aside from weapons like mechs, they're quite opposed to technology. They worship nature, and pray to a mythical goddess they call the Divine Lady. So, if any Kuri tribe member makes a vow in the name of the Divine Lady, you can rest assured they mean it."

Everyone seemed interested in this.

Hai Lian noticed that he had everyone's attention, and continued happily, "The Kuri tribe may not be a huge tribe, with primitive technology, but seldom do people meddle with them. They're weapon enthusiasts, investing much of their efforts in weapons technology, which is above average. Besides, the tribe members are all able and eager to fight, so people usually leave them alone."

These people listening to him were actually his employers, and the ones who will give him his full-skeleton mech, so Hai Lian reminded them, "However, the Kuri tribe is not exactly ruling the place diligently. As long as you leave them alone, they wouldn't care what you do in Foundation city. As a result, Foundation is actually in quite a social mess. You'll see fights anywhere, anytime, so please be careful."

As they heard that there would be fights in the city, everyone instantly raised their guard. Hai Lian quickly soothed them. "Relax, everyone. I believe that no one in Foundation would dare to mess with us." The residents of Foundation were all weathered fighters, and would probably recognize that this group was not one to be messed with.

As they approached Foundation, the mechs in the sky grew numerous, and so did the pedestrians. Most of them walked steadily with hardened eyes. Their clothing looked weathered, and their faces even more so. Ye Chong was curious about this. In the Five Galaxies, the people on the streets all walked casually, their faces an unhealthy pallor, more like sick people compared to the

people here.

"Who are they?" Ye Chong asked, pointing at them.

Hai Lian took a glance, and replied, "They're combat experts."

"Combat experts?" Ye Chong was surprised. Combat experts were rare in the Five Galaxies, a forgotten line of work. Most of them only practiced in their own dojos. Here, however, Ye Chong had seen dozens of them walking around. Could combat experts actually be common in this place?

"Yes, they're combat experts who've gone through ascetic training. Most combat experts who reached a certain level of skill would leave their homes for ascetic training to improve their skills and harden their resolve. These people you see are combat experts visiting here to train themselves. A combat expert who had completed his or her ascetic training is well respected here, and is usually very strong," Hai Lian explained. However, he was immediately reminded of how crazily strong these people are. Now that was true strength.

Ye Chong grew curious. "Why are combat experts still popular here? Shouldn't mech pilots be more mainstream?"

Hai Lian explained evenly, "Mech piloting is indeed the popular choice, but without a strong body, it's almost impossible to improve your piloting skills beyond an intermediate level. Besides, what's a better way to train yourself physically than going into combat training? Also, many mech pilots still die in the hands of combat experts these days!"

Ye Chong nodded in agreement. For someone as skilled in mech piloting as him, he knew that advanced piloting skills would require more stringent demands on the mech pilot's physical condition. Even a single change in direction, when done in half the time, would increase the demand on the pilot's physical abilities by more than half. Ye Chong had killed more than a few mech pilots outside his mech, thus he understood that mech pilots outside

their mechs were usually weak and vulnerable.

"Here, everyone learns to fight from their childhood. Since children's bodies haven't fully matured, mech pilot training is not suitable for them. Besides, learning to fight not only helps to strengthen them physically, but it can also toughen their minds. Their instructors are combat experts. Many mech pilots would eventually head outside to train themselves as well." Hai Lian added, "Mental strength is more important than skills."

"That makes sense," Ye Chong agreed. This mindset seemed to be better than the popular mindset in the Five Galaxies. Hence, the mech pilots here must be stronger than those from the Five Galaxies.

The city was surrounded by all sorts of fauna. The wide stretch of blooming flowers was an eye-opener. One could even see some beautiful ladies among the flowers, tending to them.

Hai Lian whispered, "These woman are from the Kuri tribe. They like to take care of the plants. Please don't damage any of the plants, or we'll be in deep trouble. The Kuri tribe women can be very troublesome."

Ye Chong nodded in understanding. The view was beautiful, with all kinds of flowering plants and trees neatly arranged in a refreshing manner. Outside the foliage areas were many parking spaces. The mechs in the air would land here, and the mech pilot would hop out of the pilot cabin, withdraw their mechs, and walk into the city.

Ye Chong found that most of the mech pilots here did not use rope ladders, but made their way down to the ground by themselves. As expected, the mech pilots here were mostly combat trained. They all looked like tough characters, completely unlike the superficial mech pilots in the Five Galaxies.

Sang Fan and the rest were tense. They had never seen so many strangers before. The way they held themselves got the attention

of the people around them. Hai Lian groaned inside and asked them to relax themselves, to no avail.

Ye Chong said nothing. He understood that their habits could not be overcome so soon. He handled himself worse in the past. However, he also knew that they were standing out too much, which made it easier to get them into trouble. Fortunately, they were all strictly disciplined, and would not attack first without his order.

When a standard combat squad in battle formation entered the scene, its members all looking serious and deadly, it was hard to blend in the background. No one dared to stay within 20 meters of them. Even the Kuri tribe women tending to the plants stood up, and gave them odd looks.

In fact, just as Hai Lian predicted, their group stood out too much. Hai Lian saw a few mech pilot squads directing meaningful looks at them. However, with the deadly aura coming from them, no one dared to come and greet the newcomers.

The deadly aura coming from their group was too strong. Hai Lian did not know that the Sang family villagers had just fought a war, and were still fresh from that experience.

The people around them gossiped in low whispers.

"Let's go." Ye Chong did not want to be stared at like some creature. Besides, their wary glances made him uncomfortable.

Inside the city, Ye Chong felt like he had returned to civilization. This was not a wasteland like the Archipelago. He could see traces of technology everywhere. The wide street was filled with pedestrians bustling about, unlike in the cities where Ye Chong had visited before. In any city in the Five Galaxies, pedestrians were usually rarely seen on the road. The sky was the main road of transport. Conventional transportation was replaced with mechs. Here in the city, however, there were no mechs flying above them.

The street was lined with shops, and the holographic advertisements on display threw Ye Chong into a daze. He was reminded of Mu and Shang, and then Bai Linan, and the days gone past. Now, however, he did not know where Mu and Shang were, or how Bai Linan was doing. Truly, life unfolds in unexpected ways.

However, Ye Chong quickly focused and mocked himself, "Since when am I so sentimental?"

Sang Fan and the group had never seen these high tech holographic advertisements before, and they all gaped at them.

"Bumpkins," someone laughed at them. The people around them were all looking at them condescendingly.

Hai Lian stopped in his tracks. These onlookers must have a death wish, to mess with the group he was with. And now ... He felt deeply troubled.

However, after a long moment, Ye Chong and the others did not respond at all.

Hai Lian did not know that Sang Fan and the others did not even know what a bumpkin was. As for Ye Chong, he was well aware of the insult, but equally uninterested in such meaningless fights. Thus, he ignored the comment.

As Hai Lian had informed him, most of the stores here sell mechs, weaponry and such. The next most popular goods were mech parts and the like. Ye Chong even found a few stores specialized in less conventional or traditional weapons. This intrigued him a lot. In the Five Galaxies, stores like these were almost unheard of. Traditional weapons were more like artworks there. However, since there were many combat experts in the city, Ye Chong realized that it was only reasonable to see those stores here. As a combat expert himself, he knew that there were combat experts who specialized in these unconventional weapons.

Ye Chong asked Hai Lian abruptly, "Where can I buy dimension keystones?" He now needed a large amount of dimension keystones. Without them, Sang Fan and the rest would not be able to take Collision with them. If they found themselves in trouble, they would be more at risk without their mechs.

Hai Lian quickly answered, "All the stores selling mech parts will have them, but ..." He seemed unable to continue further.

"But what?" Ye Chong looked strangely at Hai Lian.

"Dimension keystones are not cheap, do you have enough money?" Hai Lian looked carefully at Ye Chong.

Ye Chong realized his predicament then.

Chapter 284: The Three Aristocratic Families

Ever since he escaped the trash planet, Ye Chong had never worried about money. This was firstly due to his shallow understanding of currency, and secondly, Mu and Shang had always dealt with this issue for him.

Now, the first problem he faced was actually about money. He knew next to nothing about ways to make more money. If it was just him alone, he would have acted with less worries; however, with so many with him, it was just not feasible to use more extreme methods.

Ye Chong turned to Sang Fan and asked, "Any lavagold weapons?"

Sang Fan immediately responded, "Only a lavagold dagger."

"Hand it over." Ye Chong reached out his hand, and Sang Fan quickly released the dagger secured on his thigh and placed it in Ye Chong's hand. Sang Fan's dagger was made by him, the sheathe made out of tough steelbat skin, simple and practical.

Hai Lian looked at the inconspicuous weapon with interest. Lavahold dagger? What a curious name.

Ye Chong took the dagger and headed towards one of the traditional weapons stores. The others quickly adjusted their formation accordingly, keeping Ye Chong at the center as he walked towards the store.

The discipline showed by the small group gathered a few interested glances, some of them with fear.

As Ye Chong entered the traditional weapons store, the storekeeper noticed the large group and greeted them warmly, anticipating good business.

The storekeeper smiled widely at Ye Chong as he said, "How can I help you, sir? Please have a look around, if you see anything of interest, feel free to give them a try. If you need any special weapons, our store offers custom build services. Our main weapons craftsman is Duo Lanmen, with the title Strange. He's well suited for making more unique weapons."

Hai Lian could not help but be surprised. He never imagined that a small store like this would have a weapons craftsman with the Strange title. A weapons craftsman with a title was much coveted by any powerful organization. The title denoted the specialization in their work. Duo Lanmen, for example, with the title Strange, would be specialized in unique weapons.

Hai Lian's surprise pleased the storekeeper. Duo Lanmen was his store's main star. He would make the same introduction to every new customer, and their look of surprise was something he enjoyed very much.

However, seeing the rest of the group unmoved, the storekeeper guessed that they must have been seasoned veterans who would not be impressed by the normal things he had on display. On the other hand, he also knew that this kind of customers were usually the ones who would spend more. Perhaps he had a huge opportunity here. Just when he was about to show them the best products from his store, the leader spoke.

"Do you buy weapons here?" The calm voice came from Ye Chong.

The storekeeper paused. They were not here to purchase anything. He was heavily disappointed, but kept the smile on his face as he said, "Of course we do, what would you be selling, sir? Please give me a moment, for your reassurance, all authentication and valuation in this store is carried out by the weapons craftsman Duo Lanmen himself. Will this be agreeable to you?"

The group seemed dodgy to him. Best if he let Duo Lanmen to

inspect whatever they had to sell, since no one would actually doubt the decision of a weapons craftsman with a title.

Ye Chong nodded and said, "Alright." He then turned his attention to the weapons on display in the store.

They were all unpopular or traditional weapons, and came in all types and shapes. It was definitely an eye-opener for him. Sang Fan and the rest were even more impressed. However, even in this store, they still kept their vigilance, with their formation unbroken. Their lives in Archipelago had taught them to never let their guard down.

A while later, a middle-aged man came out from a deeper part of the store. He was simply dressed and looked gaunt, with a thin face. However, his eyes sparkled with life, and his hands were broad and powerful, covered with calluses.

The storekeeper introduced, "This is the craftsman, Duo Lanmen. Old Duo, this customer wants to sell a weapon, please have a look."

Duo Lanmen nodded, and turned to Ye Chong. "Oh, what would you like to sell, young man?"

Ye Chong nodded in greeting and pulled out the lavagold dagger in his hand. "This one."

Duo Lanmen took the dagger, but did not unsheathe it immediately. Instead, he studied the sheath closely, and after a long moment, asked in confusion, "What is this sheath made of, I wonder?"

Ye Chong replied, "The skin of a kind of bird, called steelbat."

Duo Lanmen rubbed the sheath with his right hand and praised, "Tough but resilient, dark and practical. Excellent." The storekeeper immediately felt much happier. Just by the dagger's sheath made of animal hide that Duo Lanmen had never even seen before, the weapon was gold. Old Duo had high standards, and

would rarely compliment.

Duo Lanmen suddenly unsheathed the dagger, with a flash of gold from the lavagold blade.

"Lavagold!" Duo Lanmen's astonished declaration came in a trembling voice.

Lavagold's beauty was apparent no matter where it was. The dagger was entirely covered in gold, shining like molten gold.

"What a pity ..." Duo Lanmen muttered expressively.

"What?" The storekeeper could not help but ask, and everyone directed their attention to Duo Lanmen.

Duo Lanmen explained plainly, "I don't know which prodigal son did this, such a waste of material. The dagger's design is unremarkable, entirely unsuited to be made with lavagold. More importantly, he'd used so much lavagold to make such an uninteresting dagger. What a prodigal son, what a truly wasteful heir! This is impossible, if that man is my student, hmph ..." Duo Lanmen grew angrier as he spoke. The storekeeper quickly took the lavagold dagger from him, the precious weapon.

Sang Fan was now blushing like a cherry, but Duo Lanmen and the storekeeper did not notice him. The rest of the Sang family members looked at Sang Fan helplessly, while Sang Ling hid a smile behind her hands. For the moment, Sang Fan was in an incredibly awkward position.

Ye Chong asked, "Then how much do you think this dagger is worth, sir?"

Duo Lanmen replied, "At least 30 thousand credits."

The storekeeper was startled, and nearly dropped the dagger. "Old Duo, you think it's worth 30 thousand credits?" The storekeeper was troubled. Even Hai Lian was speechless, gaping at the value. How could a dagger be worth 30 thousand credits? Heavens, what was this lavagold, to be worth so much?

"Yes. 30 thousand credits is for the lavagold and the dagger's sheath. The dagger itself is worthless," Duo Lanmen explained in all seriousness.

From their reactions, Ye Chong thought that the price was appropriate. However, he had no idea what 30 thousand credits were actually worth.

"Alright, 30 thousand credits then," Ye Chong said.

As they exited the weapons store, Hai Lian thought he was still in a dream. That dagger had been sold for 30 thousand credits! Had the world gone mad? He was now feeling a little distracted, like in a dream. In that short exchange, he had suddenly added 30 thousand credits to his account. Ye Chong and the rest had no cards, so the 30 thousand credits were all added into his card.

"How much is 30 thousand credits?" Ye Chong suddenly turned to ask him.

"How much is 30 thousand credits?" Hai Lian answered reflexively, "30 thousand credits is the price of my Moonlight." Hai Lian had always worked hard, and alone. As a freelance hunter, his income was not much. It took a few years for him to save enough to buy Moonlight. Now that he saw a mere dagger sold at 30 thousand credits, how could he still remain calm?

Ye Chong noticed Hai Lian's mood, and knew that he was not fit to answer anything clearly. He turned to the rest and asked, "Any of you have lavagold weapons too?"

The rest shook their heads. Most of the lavagold weapons were left behind in the Sang Family Village, since they needed to fly Collision. It seemed that selling lavagold was not an option.

With the money they have, Ye Chong and the group entered a mech parts store. Sang Mu was still guarding the mechs. If he could first solve the problem of dimension keystones for at least this group, then they would be safer when facing any danger.

In the mech parts store, Ye Chong noted at the prices of the mech parts and realized that the 30 thousand credits were actually not worth a lot. A brainwave controlled dimension keystone cost at least two thousand credits, and could go up to 10 thousand credits.

The group was stunned.

"Why are they so expensive?" Sang Ling gasped. Women were more naturally inclined to be sensitive to prices. The rest of them nodded in agreement.

Hai Lian had recovered himself then, and gave them an odd look as he replied plainly, "Of course they are. Are mechs never expensive? How can you compare a mech with a traditional weapon?"

His explanation made sense to the group. To them, mechs were the pinnacle of technological achievement. How could they not be expensive?

Ye Chong heard nothing from the conversation. His attention was completely focused on a mech part displayed on the holographic screen before him.

Ye Chong's eyes widened. How was this possible? He nearly gasped out loud, unable to maintain his calm. The products listed on the holographic screen and the mech parts on display were too unreal for him to accept.

Nanowave guns, black gold alloy shields, Greenwood engines ... These mech equipments were common here, and not too expensive.

Nanowave guns were standard weaponry for the MPA; black gold alloy shields were unique to Black Cove; Greenwood engines were only used by the Sanctuary. The top class mechs from the Five Galaxies were common goods around here.

What in the universe was He Yue galaxy? Why would they have goods from the Three Forces? Could the Three Forces actually

have originated from this place?

On the other hand, Ye Chong also saw many mech parts found only in Mu's and Shang's database archives. All this while, Ye Chong had thought of the mech's database as a collection of the most advanced technology in the world. His battle experience with Black Cove, MPA and the Sanctuary had suggested as much. However, Ye Chong found that he could buy their weapons here, if only at an expensive price. With money, he could buy anything. Some of the weapons were enough to make Ye Chong jealous.

Ye Chong quickly scrolled through the introductions for these mech parts on the holographic screen.

The nanowave guns were built by the Xue Lai clan; the black gold alloy shield by the Ye family; the Greenwood engine by the Xi Feng tribe.

"Xue Lai Clan, Ye Family, Xi Feng Tribe ..." Ye Chong muttered to himself. Weren't they the Three Aristocratic Families, as Hai Lian had told him? What was their relationship with the Three Forces?

Now that he thought of it, he was now enemies with the Three Forces. If they were related to the Three Aristocratic Families, then the chances of him having a peaceful conversation with the aristocrats would be nil. Ye Chong smiled wryly to himself. It seemed that he had just p*ssed off all three Aristocratic Families of the He Yue galaxy.

However, Ye Chong quickly calmed himself. So what if it was the aristocrats? Ye Chong was not afraid of them. After the initial shock, he regained his composure. The current Ye Chong was much stronger than ever before. Running away was no longer his only option against powerful adversaries.

The only thing that vexed him now was the problem of laying low, staying away from the Three Aristocratic Families at least for awhile. With their current numbers, they could only escape back to Archipelago if they were found out.

It was fortunate that they had Archipelago as a retreat point. As long as he stayed vigilant, even the combined effort of the Three Aristocratic Families would not bring him down so easily. Besides, Ye Chong was confident of the Sang family members. With their strength and readiness for war, as long as he armed them well, they would at least stand a chance.

For now, though, they were definitely not a match for the Three Aristocratic Families. They held no advantage at all.

Ye Chong asked Hai Lian suddenly, "How is the intel network of the Three Aristocratic Families? Do they have power in Foundation?"

Hai Lian was caught off guard, but replied, "The Three Aristocratic Families? Of course they're good. No one could compete with them in terms of intel! They have people in every city, including Foundation city. Are you looking for the one of the aristocrats?"

Ye Chong was startled by his words, and quickly said to Hai Lian, "Buy eight brainwave-controlled dimension keystones, and use the remaining credits to buy paint, of any color. Quick!" While he was not exactly familiar with the intel network of the Three Aristocratic Families, he was however familiar with the intel network of the Three Forces. The Three Aristocratic Families would not fare worse! With his group standing out so much, surely they would be identified soon.

Seeing Ye Chong so nervous, the group knew that something must have happened. Sang Fan and the rest quickly raised their guard. The air around them chilled instantly, enough to scatter the other customers away from them. Some customers even quietly left the store.

Hai Lian did not dawdle, since he saw Sang Tie's eyes fixed on his throat. He could feel a chill down his spine. He made the purchase at record time, pushing down his reluctance on spending so much

credits in such a short time.

The automatic vendor system soon delivered the goods to the group.

"We leave the city now," Ye Chong announced coldly, and led the group out of the store.

Chapter 285: What a Small World

The group that had just entered the city from the flower path had left a deep impression in Luo Xing. This was an elite group, he was certain of it. He could also see that they were all excellent combat experts by the way they took their steps, and the looks in their eyes. Most staggering of all was their deadly aura, one born from a long history of fighting for one's life, something impossible to fake. All the while they were here, they remained perfectly in formation, a demonstration of good coordination.

If it were only a single person, Luo Xing would have thought he was seeing a combat expert. However, this was a group of nine; or rather, a group of eight. His subordinate had identified one of them as Hai Lian, a freelance hunter. Hai Lian was a familiar character to him. As Foundation city's resident officer, he was at least familiar with the local talents. Hai Lian was admirably capable, someone he wanted to have in his team, but the man had rejected his offers repeatedly.

To think that Hai Lian was now together with this group! Just who were these people? Luo Xing was interested to know.

If they were a group of strong combat experts, he would have immediately invited them to join his clan. The Xu Lan clan had always appreciated good talent. However, the group's coordination skills had shocked him. In his opinion, even the best elite groups in the clan would not be able to top their level of coordination.

These were not combat experts. They were a group of highly trained warriors. Luo Xing knew the difference between the former and latter.

Normal people would not be able to acquire these skills. This was a mysterious force, unknown to him, emerging in the city. He Yue galaxy, where the Three Aristocratic Families had ruled over for years, was now suddenly facing an unknown power. What would

happen to the He Yue galaxy? How could he not be worried?

He had already sent a recording of the group back to the clan. He believed that someone in the clan must know something about them. He was waiting for further instructions. As for the group, he already had subordinates keeping an eye on them.

Beep beep beep. The comms device on his desk pinged.

Luo Xing was immediately agitated. The clan had always used encrypted text to relay instructions, and had never used his comms device. It seemed that this was a big one.

He breathed deeply twice to calm himself. Then, he tried his best to project a calm exterior as he answered the call.

A woman in white appeared on the comms device's holographic screen. Her outfit was white as snow, and her long hair reached her shoulders. Her face was cold as ice, her skin white as snow, and smooth as glass. An aquiline nose and cherry lips adorned her enchanting profile. However, her sharp eyes looked like they could pierce through a person's soul, that none could stare straight into them.

"You are Luo Xing?" Her crisp voice rang like an icy bell, chilling the heart of its listener.

Luo Xing replied respectfully, "I am." H*ll, it was Lady Xue herself. It looked like the group represented a significant power indeed.

Lady Xue nodded approvingly. "Hmm, well done. It seems that our training is not wasted on you. Your vigilance is commendable, the clan will remember your service this time."

Luo Xing was overjoyed inside, but he tried to keep his expression as still as possible.

"Luo Xing!" Lady Xue suddenly spoke commandingly.

Luo Xing sobered, and answered solemnly, "Yes."

"The Clan Leader's orders are to capture them, at all costs." Lady Xue ordered with a cold and stern voice.

"Yes, my lady!" Luo Xing bowed to receive his orders without hesitation.

Lady Xue softened a little and said, "You may use all your subordinates for this operation. The entire Soundfall planet's forces of the clan are also at your disposal. If you need more men, the espionage division is also ready to assist. The clan has informed the relevant personnel about this operation."

Luo Xing was surprised. He did not expect the group to be so important. Rarely did orders come directly from the Clan Leader, and now the entire clan's forces on Soundfall were his to command. Even the scarcely deployed espionage division was available for him. Who were those people? He was shocked, but curious. It seemed that this operation would not be easy. The espionage division was important to the clan, having been concealed from outsiders for decades. Once its members were exposed, there was no turning back. To think that the Clan Leader would consider using them this time! This meant that the Clan Leader was ready to use all the clan's available resources on Soundfall to capture this group. The clan's forces on the planet might all be exposed just for this operation.

Luo Xing gulped. This might be an operation too large for him to take on. The Clan Leader's orders to spare no resources left him nervous. F*ck, he might just die in this operation. For some reason, Luo Xing had an ill premonition.

Lady Xue looked at Luo Xing and said, "There are some other details for this operation. Firstly, the man protected in the center must be captured alive. Try your best to capture the rest alive, but if it's not possible, do what is necessary. Secondly, I believe that the Ye family and the Xi Feng tribe must have received intel on the group as well. They will make their move. Your second mission is to make sure that the man is not captured by any of them.

Remember, this is more important than the Clan Leader's order. It's best if we can obey the Clan Leader's orders, but if you can't, better to let him escape than allow the other two families to get him, understand? If it's impossible to even let him escape, then, you know what to do." Lady Xue directed a meaningful glance at Luo Xing.

Luo Xing could feel cold sweat drenching his back.

"Of course, the Clan Leader knows that your forces are limited. Our combatants from the nearest three plants have been ordered to gather at Soundfall. On the other hand, all members of the clan's Ten Pillars, excluding me and Lian, are heading your way. However, due to the distance, they'll only reach you in five days' time."

Luo Xing was already speechless from shock. Eight members from the Ten Pillars were coming to Soundfall. The scale of this operation was unlike any that was carried out in decades. However, if they would only arrive after five days, how could they be able to help? Luo Xing smiled wryly despite himself.

Lady Xue noticed his expression and said, "While five days is too long, this is the fastest they can manage. Fortunately, the other two families do not have any trump card mech pilots of their own on Soundfall. You're a smart man, work hard, and once the operation is over, the Clan Leader will make an exception and welcome you as a member of the clan."

The call ended, and Luo Xing was left feeling lost. He never thought that the clan would place such great importance on the group. No, it was the man they wanted. The Clan Leader made it clear that the man must be captured alive, while the others were not so important. However, Lady Xue's last words were greatly encouraging. To be welcomed as a member of the clan was a great honor. It was very difficult to be accepted into the clan. Some of his seniors had worked hard for decades, and never managed to become one.

Just then, his comms device beeped again.

"Sir, the group is leaving the city." His subordinate reported urgently from the holographic screen. Luo Xing awoke from his dazed moment, and chastised himself for being distracted. It seemed that he was really perturbed by the scale of the operation.

"Stop them," Luo Xing ordered in a low voice. "Send out all our combat experts and stop them. Remember, capture them alive."

"Sir yes sir, you just wait for the good news." His subordinate sounded excited. It had been awhile since his men were stationed in the city, and they had never seen any action so far, their days spent mostly in boredom. It was only natural that they were excited for this operation. He had 30 over combat experts under his command. They had all gone through ascetic training, and he was confident of their abilities.

Suddenly, the comms device on his wrist beeped again. When he saw who was calling him, Luo Xing felt a sudden apprehension.

"Sir, the Ye Family and the Xi Feng Tribe mech pilots are gathering. No details yet." The low voice sounded nervous.

D*mned, so they had begun moving as well. Luo Xing cursed the mech pilots from the two families.

Ye Chong and company raced along the street towards the city's entrance. Ye Chong looked grim. He had fought against the Three Forces before, and was familiar with their capabilities. He was sure that they were found out by now.

Ye Chong never imagined that the Three Aristocratic Families of the He Yue galaxy and the Three Forces would be related to each other. They must now quickly head back to Sang Mu and the rest, so that they at least have mechs to defend themselves. Then, they must retreat as soon as possible to the Calamitous Asteroid Belt. With 5,000 Collision mechs piloted by the Sang tribe members, even the combined forces from the Three Aristocratic Families

would not take them lightly.

Ye Chong's reaction had disturbed the rest in the group. They all looked ready to kill, scaring off anyone standing in their way. The group ran with all they had, no longer hiding their true abilities. Poor Hai Lian had to be carried by Sang Tie again, for fear of delaying them.

Ye Chong's eyes suddenly widened.

"Leaving so soon, ladies and gentlemen? Hehe, why not stay a few more days, try out our Xue Lai Clan's special anchovy dish before you go." The leader hailed. The surrounding spectators heard that it was the Xue Lan Clan, and quickly moved out of the way. A few bolder souls stayed back to watch. These people were curious. The Xue Lai Clan had always been discreet, and seldom acted so openly. Who were these people, to evoke such a reaction from the Xue Lai Clan?

Ye Chong ignored them. To him, words were wasted in this kind of situation.

Seeing Ye Chong ignoring the taunt, the others followed suit. Only Hai Lian, still carried by Sang Tie, was growing very pale. To offend the Three Aristocratic Families in the He Yue galaxy was the equivalent of a death wish! His life was over, he was sure. He thought of the power wielded by the Three Aristocratic Families, and wanted to die there and then.

Seeing Ye Chong and company not slowing down in the least, the leader turned grim. "Will you not accept our hospitality?"

"Attack. Leave no one alive." Ye Chong's plain voice struck a chord of fear.

Sang Tie and the rest immediately sped up, leaving only an afterimage in their wake.

The combat experts of the Xue Lai clan did not expect that the group would really attack them, and panicked as a result.

The Sang tribe members were crude in their mech piloting skills, but they were shockingly competent in combat. 500 years of fighting for their survival had honed their techniques and enriched their combat experiences. Archipelago's strong gravitational force and the strong gravity regions allowed them to reach beyond the known limits of the human body.

Moreover, they fought with excellent coordination. Now, the Sang family, one of the Four Aristocratic Families from a time long past, finally demonstrated their strength before the world for the first time in 500 years.

Be it physical strength, speed, endurance, or skills, or even coordination, both sides were at entirely different levels.

This was a one-sided massacre. Their ruthless attitude, forced by Archipelago's harsh environment, was finally shown to the world. Ye Chong had no need to tell them not to leave anyone alive. It was in their nature.

Ye Chong moved as fiercely accurate as before, often targeting the weak spots such as the throat, killing with a single move without wasting any effort. The rest of them did not have an understanding of the human body like Ye Chong did. It did not really matter, in the end. Even alloy metal would break under their force, much less the human body, made of flesh and blood.

Sang Tie and company killed in a bloody way. Often, limbs were broken, or skulls crushed. The observers around them nearly vomited. Even Sang Ling attacked without mercy, and the people could only watch with cold fear.

It was like wolves attacking a flock of sheep. There were no stylish moves, only breathtakingly fast movements, simple and accurate. In just half a minute, the ground was covered with corpses and pools of blood. In that half a minute, one could only hear the dull thumps of punches, cracks of bones breaking, the hiss of blood flowing out of the victims, and the terrifying shrieks

coming from the combat experts of the Xue Lai clan. The mysterious group had remained silent throughout as they went on their killing spree.

The spectators around were all sporting an unhealthy pallor. They quickly retreated, afraid to get further involved.

Chapter 286: A Surging Undercurrent

The group was terrifying! The spectators were deeply troubled by their cold, indifferent expressions that did not change as they killed, like they were not actually executing a massacre, but doing something mundane and routine. Even butchers would not be so emotionless.

The residents here were all capable of combat at some level. They had all decided that Ye Chong's group members had demonstrated incredible strength, strong enough to qualify them as Jie experts! Only Jie experts could be so strong.

Nine Jie experts!

This was unthinkable! No one would believe that nine Jie experts were fighting together without seeing it for themselves. Jie experts were the strongest in the hierarchy of combat expertise, the pinnacle of achievement in the ancient art of combat. Generations of combat experts thought of the Jie experts as shrouded in mystery.

There were not many Jie experts in He Yue galaxy. You can count them all with your fingers. They were mostly enlisted by larger organizations, often responsible of combat instruction for the organization's inner disciples. They rarely showed themselves outside, only taking on the occasional role of bodyguard. Even the Ye family, with the most number of Jie experts, had only five of them.

Now, they were nine Jie experts on the streets! Just where did they come from?

Ye Chong did not look back at the corpses, since he knew that no one would survive their attack. He said, "Let's go," and the group vanished before the spectators's eyes.

That was too creepy! They moved eerily fast. If anyone still had

their doubts about the group's strength as Jie experts, they were quickly disillusioned.

The scent of blood filled the air. One could hear some witnesses vomiting beyond the scene.

Up in the air of Foundation city, another form of battle was taking place.

300 mechs, made up of forces from three different sides, were at a stalemate in the skies. The tension was thick enough to cut through with a knife. None of the mechs dared to make any movements. Their strengths were almost equal to one another. If any side attacked first, the other two sides might just cooperate and finish off the instigating side.

This disquieting scenario was a conundrum for the leaders on all three sides. However, none of them dared to make a move, for fear of suffering the fatal threat from the combined forces of the other two sides.

Luo Xing was growing more and more anxious. While he knew from Lady Xue that the other two families would make their move, he did not expect them to act so quickly. Under the circumstances, he had no choice but to stay where he was.

He could only pray that the combat experts under him would do the job. It should not be a problem, with 36 against nine. He was familiar with all the combat experts. They had all completed their ascetic training, and a few of them were even successors to some ancient combat techniques. All in all, these 36 combat experts were a formidable force in Foundation city.

It had decades since the last time the Three Aristocratic Families had openly faced-off one another. Foundation city was now in a critical state. Every mech pilot with a mech had slipped into their mechs right away. Given the situation, only a mech could protect them. In just 10 minutes, the sky above Foundation city was filled with mechs.

The surrounding spectators watched in horror at the 300 mechs confronting each other. If the three sides really started a battle, the city would suffer. The more insightful ones began to wonder if this was a herald of darker times to come. Once the Three Aristocratic Families started warring against one another openly, the He Yue galaxy would probably be plunged into a prolonged state of chaos.

No one knew the cause of this confrontation.

Just then, a large fleet of mechs were coming their way, with more than a thousand mechs. However, the people relaxed at the sight of this fleet. The battle would probably not come to be. The fleet came from the real ruler of the city, the Kuri tribe.

At last, the confrontation ended under the mediation of the Kuri tribe.

When Luo Xing saw his 36 men, his already agitated heart skipped a beat, and his face paled.

Nine Jie experts had killed in their merciless ways. Hundreds of mechs from the Three Aristocratic Families had nearly started a war. Kuri tribe's interference had stopped that. Tension in Foundation city was rising. These news spread like wildfire across the entire He Yue galaxy. Even Hai Lian's obscure reputation grew to a household name.

There were nine Jie experts. The number was hard to swallow. One could hear discussions everywhere about how nine Jie experts had seemingly appeared out of thin air, and killed 36 combat experts who had completed their ascetic training. More notably, these 36 combat experts were enlisted by the Xue Lan clan.

Who were these nine Jie experts? Why would they kill the 36 combat experts? How were they related to the Xue Lan clan? Rumours were abound.

Everyone was waiting for the nine Jie experts to make their next move. Jie experts were like mythical characters to the average

person, enough to hook their curiosity.

However, the nine Jie experts and Hai Lian had vanished into thin air. The term "vanish" was never more appropriately used. They had disappeared without a trace. In fact, when the nine Jie experts started killing, they received unprecedented attention. All the major forces had ordered their spies in every city on Soundfall planet to look for the group. Even cities on planets around Soundfall received the same orders.

However, the group seemed to have vanished without a single trace.

The public's attention was quickly diverted to the Three Aristocratic Families. The scale of their forces deployed for the group did not escape the public eye. Members of the Xue Lai clan's Ten Pillars were sent to Soundfall. The Ye family's elites had arrived on Soundfall. Xi Feng tribe's trump cards were arriving on Soundfall. The list went on and on. All attention was on Soundfall.

An undercurrent was surging on Soundfall planet.

Ye Chong had no time to consider these matters. His side was overwhelmingly disadvantaged. Any direct confrontation would be fatal to them. The group was heading as fast as they could to where Sang Mu was. Ye Chong did not care to cover their tracks any longer as they ran with all they had. He had never run like this without holding back for a long time. The rest of group noticed, and picked up their pace. However, they were not used to depending on mechs to travel, like Ye Chong. The Sang family had their own ways of running; compared to Ye Chong, they were managing more easily. After 500 years of continuous improvements, their skills were more efficient and effective.

The group's bloody methods had left the witnesses stunned. No one had dared to follow them.

They quickly reached where Sang Mu was.

"Take your mechs. Tie, pass Hai Lian to me. We're returning to Sang Pu the rest as soon as possible."

"Ok, here," Sang Tie passed Hai Lian from his hands to Ye Chong's. Poor Hai Lian, being manhandled from one person to another. He was a full adult, but was carried by Sang Tie and Ye Chong as though he weighed like nothing.

Ye Chong withdrew Han Jia and threw Hai Lian into the pilot cabin, then entering the cabin himself. The pilot cabin was not large, and now it was packed with just two people inside.

Hai Lian finally recovered his senses. When he saw Ye Chong coming into the pilot cabin, he quickly grew horrified. "Don't ... Don't ..." Could he be thinking of ... Even for someone who had his share of debauchery like Hai Lian, he never thought that he would be on the receiving end ...

Ye Chong took a glance at Hai Lian, not understand, but he had no time to think on it further. His hands were on the controls dashboard, and Han Jia was up in the sky the next moment. Inside Han Jia, Ye Chong finally heaved a sigh of relief. With him piloting Han Jia, he would at least stand a chance in battle.

Ye Chong thought Hai Lian's mech was too slow, so he brought Hai Lian into the pilot cabin with him instead. He never thought that this decision had led to the illusion of the group vanishing into thin air.

Be it Ye Chong's Han Jia or the group's Collision mechs, they were all full-skeleton mechs. Full-skeleton mechs had excellent anti-detection properties that allowed them to safely evade the tight surveillance on Soundfall. The group had even crossed paths with a few flotilla of starships along the way, but none of them were aware of their existence.

Han Jia's holographic scanning system was so simply that it was practically useless. Collision was even more primitive, that it did not have a holographic scanning system; only a small observing

window was installed. It was nearly impossible for them to notice that they were pursued, if there ever were. On the other hand, the starships were all used to relying on holographic scanning systems that they never thought of using the ancient way of optical scanning!

However, Collision mechs had absolutely brilliant speed.

Once they reached where the base, Hai Lian finally realised how fast the odd-shaped mechs were, and that he had actually slowed down the group last time. He was quite jealous of them. He had prided on Moonlight for its speed, but compared to these odd-shaped mechs, Moonlight seemed to crawl like a snail.

No mech pilot would not yearn for a mech that can fly faster, much less a speed-type mech pilot like Hai Lian, who relied more on speed than anything.

Once back to the base, everyone instantly felt relieved.

However, the immediate problem presented itself - where should they go next?

Should they return to Archipelago? That was the last resort. The truth was, if they went back just like this, they would only feel dissatisfied, be it Ye Chong or the Sang family members. Since the Three Aristocratic Families and the Three Forces were closely related, there must be some way to travel between the He Yue galaxy and the Five Galaxies. However, from the fact that even Hai Lian had not heard of the Five Galaxies, this travelling route must be controlled by the Three Aristocratic Families, unbeknownst to outsiders. Ye Chong did the maths in his mind.

Mu and Shang were still somewhere out there. If they had reached the Five Galaxies, Ye Chong was sure that he would find them soon enough. He had stayed with the mech for so long, and had many shared memories in the Five Galaxies. With Mu's meticulous nature, he would definitely keep watch of the places where they had been together. Once he reached one of those

places, he would be able to get in touch with them.

The He Yue galaxy, however, was too unfamiliar to him. Connecting to Mu and Shang would be a difficult task.

The group gathered around.

Ye Chong asked, "Where in the He Yue galaxy is the influence of the Three Aristocratic Families weakest?"

"Where is the influence of the Three Aristocratic Families weakest? Let me think." Hai Lian knitted his brows together in deep thought. He knew that they had made enemies with the Xue Lan clan after that previous battle. It was too late for him to back out. Besides, from Ye Chong's words, it seemed that the other two families were also involved. The only choice left for him would be to follow Ye Chong and his group to save his own hide.

Everyone looked to the frowning Hai Lian. None of them asked Ye Chong about his story with the Three Aristocratic Families. The man had become the leader of the Sang tribe in spirit. As for the Three Aristocratic Families or whatever, they were not scared at all. 500 years ago, the Sang family was one of the Four Aristocratic Families. They too had aristocratic blood flowing in their veins. Besides, they believed that as long as the good sir was with them, the Sang family would be restored to its former glory one day.

"Oh, right, I've thought of a place," Hai Lian said, excited. "Gray Valley, let's go to Gray Valley."

"Gray Valley?" Ye Chong repeated the name as a question.

"Yes, Gray Valey." Hai Lian seemed unusually certain of it, and quickly explained, "Gray Valley is not an actual valley, but a region on the other side of the Calamitous Asteroid Belt. It comprises of 124 planets. Originally, the place was inhabited by some primitive tribes, but one day, some of the freelance pilots who felt distasteful against the aristocrats escaped to that place. Soon, the population grew, consisting of people who did not like the aristocrats. They

offered a helping hand to the local tribes, and gradually gained their acceptance. As more and more people grew tired of the aristocrats, the population in Gray Valley increased. They rebelled against the aristocrats. Then, Gray Valley barred any aristocrats from entering. If any mech pilot was found to be from an aristocratic family, they would be hunted down until the ends of the world. This reaction comes naturally to the area's inhabitants. Any Gray Valley resident would do it."

"So there's a place like that," Ye Chong mused to himself.

"The aristocrats tried to take over Gray Valley before, but their forces were met with unprecedented resistance. The united fleet of all the aristocratic families were annihilated. Since then, the people knew that the aristocrats were not invincible."

Hai Lian's mind wandered as he narrated the story. Stories about rebelling against power were always moving.

"However, Gray Valley is a dangerous place. No large organization could survive there. The largest body you'll see is a small organization, like a mech squad. Fights are common, and the weak die fast. Mech pilots who enter the place are all the ones who are confident of their own abilities. Someone once said that the strongest mech pilots do not come from the Three Aristocratic Families, but from Gray Valley.

"It's also the largest black market in the galaxy. In order to maintain stable trading activity, no one is allowed to attack trading fleets. That's one of the Three Death Precepts."

"The Three Death Precepts?" Sang Fan asked, curious.

"That's right. Anyone who violates the Three Death Precepts will be hunted down by all the Gray Valley residents. The first Precept is to not be an aristocrat, the second is to never harm local residents, and the third is to never attack trading fleets. Gray Valley residents can and will kill anyone who violates any of the Three Death Precepts, and they'll even be heavily rewarded for it."

"Interesting," Sang Pu commented casually, a flicker of excitement quickly disappearing from his eyes.

Chapter 287: Random Motley Crew

There were many routes to reach Gray Valley from where Ye Chong and the Sang tribe were now. However, all of them required the group to travel through a large part of the He Yue galaxy. This was extremely dangerous for Ye Chong and the rest. While full-skeleton mechs had anti-detection properties, the probability of being discovered if they followed any of these routes was higher than 80 percent. Besides, without Mu and Shang, it was impossible for Ye Chong to discreetly bribe their way through without leaving a trace.

Hence, Ye Chong chose another route. They would fly parallel to the Calamitous Asteroid Belt. It was equivalent to making a big roundabout along the asteroid belt. While the distance was longer, they would be inside the asteroid belt throughout the journey, which made it less likely for the Three Aristocratic Families to find them.

According to Hai Lian, there were no large outposts in the Calamitous Asteroid Belt. Most of the people there were freelance pilots, and the occasional small mech pilot squad there to hunt for wild beasts. Besides, Ye Chong's route would take them deep into the Calamitous Asteroid Belt, where people visited. Even Hai Lian, a long resident of the area, would never have travelled to such a deep part of the asteroid belt.

Ye Chong's plan was accepted without disputes. Before the battalion took off, Ye Chong ordered for all the mechs to be painted. The skeleton material was too unique to be overlooked. If they flew the full-skeleton mechs without concealing the skeleton texture, it would only be too easy to get into trouble.

He Yue galaxy's paint material was of a more high quality than the ones Chong had used in the Five Galaxies. It adhered well to the surface, did not peel easily, and the colours were bright and shiny. Ye Chong did not care what colour they used. That day, the

Sang tribe members seemed to have been inspired overnight to become artists. Everyone painted their mechs with vigorous enthusiasm, laughing as they went about producing their very own 3D art. Sang Ling's mech, for example, looked beautiful. It had a bright sun, shining over many of the Archipelago's wild beasts. Her painting was lifelike and exotic. Compared to Sang Ling, however, the rest of them were not as successful. Most of their mechs were covered with patches of random colours. Together, the 5,000 mechs were an eyesore. They looked a random motley crew of inferior mechs. They looked so miserable that Hai Lian could die of shame.

Ye Chong painted his mech in a brownish dark gray. The advantage was that his mech might be mistaken for an asteroid from afar. He was far too fond of ambushing strategies to give it up.

Ye Chong even sent a few men back to the Sang Family Village to inform them of the current situation, and asked that they do not send anyone out in the short term. To the Sang Family Village, now was the time to rest and heal, and not go out wandering. The people he sent to the village also took with them a schematics diagram by Ye Chong. This was a goods transport flying vessel that he designed recently. It was modified from Collision. It had a large body, and flew slowly. However, it was suitable for transporting goods, something that the Sang tribe needed at the moment.

More importantly, the goods transport vessel was made completely of skeletons, and can travel safely through the Red Sea.

After everything was settled, the battalion set off for Gray Valley. It was a pity that they did not have a starship, or they would be able to do a warp jump and save travelling time.

Ye Chong was now deeply troubled. For the moment, they had no money at all. Nothing. Ye Chong suddenly found that this money problem that he had never worried about was now his main concern.

He needed money for a starship, or a dimension keystone, or a comms device ...

Ye Chong was poor as a pauper. If he was not together with this large battalion, he would have just robbed some rich household. However, now that they needed to lay low, with the Three Aristocratic Families onto them like mad, robbing was out of the question.

In fact, it was not only Ye Chong who was poor. The rest of the Sang tribe members had no money too. They looked at the eight people who followed Ye Chong into the city, using their dimension keystones to magically withdraw their mechs, and were so very jealous. Once they found out that this magical device could be bought with money, all of them became obsessed with this thing called "money".

They even suggested robbing that mech parts store. They even formed a detailed and complete action plan, but were disappointed when the good sir rejected it. Hai Lian was frustrated, since the plan had actually won the approval of everyone else before it was presented to Ye Chong.

Were these people pirates? Hai Lian felt that he himself, not entirely angelic in his behaviour, looked pure and innocent compared to them.

However, once he saw Ye Chong rejecting their plan decisively, he was slightly relieved. It seemed that the leader still had a good heart. However, Ye Chong's next comment was like a blow to his head, "The time isn't right. Plan's too crude. Rejected."

After that, Hai Lian watched stupidly at Sang Pu and the rest as they discussed on ways to improve their robbing operation.

On the other hand, Hai Lian was also annoyed that the holographic scanning system and comms device on his Moonlight were removed and reinstalled onto Sang Pu's Collision. Moonlight's photon processor was also moved to Sang Fan's mech.

Looking at the almost bare Moonlight, Hai Lian could feel his heart bleeding in pain. Besides, he could not fly Moonlight himself, but had to sit in with Sang Tie, that savage man. Sang Tie had a strong body odour that threatened to kill off his sense of smell. Just when did the guy last shower? Hai Lian wanted to cry.

"What a bunch of savages!" Again and again, he cursed the Sang tribe members in his heart.

Soon, however, Ye Chong gave the order to move out. 5,000 Collision mechs began to advance based on the designated trajectory.

Hai Lian found it odd that the savages seemed to know the Calamitous Asteroid Belt well. They easily evaded the asteroids time and again. The difficult journey that he expected was surprisingly going on smoothly.

He did not know, of course, that their demonstrated ease was because they had gone through for worse territories.

The only thing that made the Sang tribe members uncomfortable was the fact that there were more wild animals here than in Archipelago. While the animals here were weaker than their Archipelago counterparts, they were still quite a handful. Many dead animals were left in their wake as they continued the designated trajectory.

The entire battalion's combat power was shocking to Hai Lian. If all those wild animals were sold to the right traders, the market price for those animals would plummet to a historical low.

"These are all money ..." Hai Lian was pained at the missed opportunity. However, looking at the indifferent expressions of the Sang tribe members, he hesitated. What would happen if they know that the animals could be sold for money? In the end, he kept his mouth shut. Getting to Gray Valley was their top priority right now. If the battalion lost control at this point, it would be disastrous.

The way he saw it, the entire battalion was made of up uninitiated savages, with the exception of that half-civilized leader. Fortunately, these savages demonstrated commendable discipline, and obeyed their leader without question.

Still, after so many days of flight, he began to realise some interesting and surprising details about the members that formed this battalion, people that he called savages.

The Calamitous Asteroid Belt was an irregular territory, but the entire battalion had advanced without slowing down. As he sat beside Sang Tie throughout, he could see Sang Tie's every move as the man maneuvered his mech. The truth was, this was his first time seeing such a primitive control lever. However, this primitive control lever, controlled by these savages, could fly the mechs with incredible precision and flexibility.

On the surface, the flying machine was as simple and primitive as anything could possibly be. However, after sitting in one for so many days, Hai Lian felt like he would probably punch anyone who dared to say that.

This flying machine was anything but primitive! It could fly up to Mach 20. What mech model could do that? Besides, it could fly on for a few weeks without the need to replenish its energy supply. Where can anyone find a mech like that in the market? With a holographic scanning system, a comms device and some long range weapons, the flying machine would be formidable. Besides, these mech parts would all be found in the market readily and in all kinds. With money, they could be installed instantly.

As for these people, Hai Lian was embarrassed that he had thought of them as savages.

Without comms devices in their flying machines, they could not communicate with each other. Even so, they had maintained formation for weeks. The flight was long and boring, a test of one's mental fortitude, much less when they could not speak with each

other. If it was Hai Lian, he would probably go crazy. However, none of these people had complained.

These people obeyed their orders without question. They were determined warriors, with excellent combat intuition and coordination. They were undeniably the best soldiers one could find.

Often Hai Lian compared them with himself, and felt all the more self-conscious.

These people had demonstrated admirable flying skills. The space around them was scattered with floating rocks, but they had never slowed down. None of them were injured so far. Besides, despite the long journey, they did not look tired at all.

Hai Lian discovered new things about these so-called savages every day, and his attitude towards them changed in response.

Since Sang Pu's mech now had a holographic scanning system, he was in charge of scouting their trajectory ahead.

The journey was uneventful so far. The place was deserted, and they had not met a single mech up till now.

"Oh, you see mechs?" Ye Chong asked, curious. With a comms device, Sang Pu could now communicate with him easily.

Sang Pu replied steadily, "Yes, 62 of them. But they're surrounded by wild beasts. It doesn't look good."

"62 mechs ..." Ye Chong wondered, but quickly replied, "Have they seen you?"

"No. We were careful, they did not notice us," Sang Pu said.

Ye Chong thought about it, and asked, "How long can they last?"

"About 20 minutes." Sang Pu's reply was concise.

"Alright, let's surround them first. Wait for further orders." Ye Chong gave the orders. He had to see the mechs for himself.

"Yes sir," Sang Pu replied. Immediately, the signal lights on both sides of Sang Pu's mech blinked rhythmically, passing down Ye Chong's orders.

Silently, the entire battalion split up into hundreds of smaller squads, like a river branching out into countless smaller streams, flowing between the floating rocks. Everyone was excited. These days, they were only flying and flying. The squad ahead of the main battalion, responsible for clearing the wild animals fared better, but they did their work too efficiently. The rest of the battalion did not see so much as an animal hair throughout the flight. Now that there were orders coming, how could they not be excited? Even their movements turned sharper.

"Hah, action, finally." Hai Lian nearly jumped at Sang Tie's loud voice.

"Action?" Hai Lian asked, still blurry from his sleep.

"Hehe, after all these days of d*mn waiting, there's finally some action." Sang Tie rubbed his hands together, his eyes positively shining with enthusiasm. However, Hai Lian could not see past the ferocity that was also present in him. He shuddered, no longer in the mood for sleep.

The signal lights continued blinking, and the mech squads flew to their positions in an orderly manner. In just a short moment, they had the 62 mechs surrounded, including the beasts around them.

The situation was now in his control, so Ye Chong began to study the mechs and the wild beasts.

Chapter 288: The Papatte Squad

Aw man! Exclaimed Old Chief Guo in his mind, as he seriously never thought he would have such a terrible day in his life before meeting these... these unknown beasts. There was a wide range of beasts lurking in the Calamitous Asteroid Belt, while they struck strong impression of being the most fearsome biological entities in the minds of the people outside. That might have been the case the whole time, but humanity had recorded most of these barbaric creatures - specifically those in the outer belt - in detail. With that in mind, Guo the Old Chief had been preparing himself ever since he was informed of his task venturing into the Calamitous Asteroid Belt, including careful inquiries on every single entry of the creatures habituated there. He thought he had been cautious enough, since this did not only concerned his survival, but also his brothers'.

And there he was, having bewilderment looking at the beasts, which none of them appeared to be in the entries he possessed. The beast was tedious at its appearance, with the two canines flashing at the corners of its mouth, and the long dripping salivation wetting the ground dark green, while at its abdomen 6 pieces of thin blades went on a fan-dancing. The entire body was fully coated with carapace, glowing in a metallic emerald, convincingly sturdy. The hexapod waved its feeble arthropod legs, the spikes over the legs were sending chills to the witness's spines.

By common sense, any unidentified creature would be far more dangerous than the known creatures, well since to get the creature identified, one must be able to first survive from it and head back to share the words, which meant... Guo and his gang were in a zone unfrequented by humanity.

These creatures were as entangling as they seemed to be. They were hunters and the preys - being the brothers of Guo - had been hunted a few. Guo the Old Chief, the one with a strong mind was

also starting to surrender to the fact that this might be the last expedition of his. Such creature was fast, really fast, that their mechs failed to get rid of it by speed. The creatures were also intelligent, they were able to dodge most of the energy beams Guo had fired.

They also travelled in groups. One could imagine the drained face of Guo when thousands of them swarmed upon his mech - it felt like the darkest day of his life, filled with green monstrosity.

What have fate prepared for me in the end? Probably death... Flinched Guo the Chief. He did not shame the death, rather he shamed himself for his inability to protect his brothers. "I shouldn't have taken that request...", muttered the chief in regrets. He was requested to acquire a kind of plant namely the "Rippling Orchid". He was filled in with nothing else than the high definition hologramic visual of the said plant, while also given the estimated location of it. Guo the Chief would never ever take this stupid task in the first place if it was not for the handsome reward and the poverty of his group.

But sadly, I am a hobo, so is my group. Thought Guo, feeling bitter about how the Papatte Squad he ran was merely a group of eighty pitiful pilots being average they were as a free spirit who never desired to join the Aristocrats. The reason why they fluttered together was because they presumed it would be an easier hunt in groups. Unfortunately, their presumption, similar to their experience, was novice, as the squad did worse yearly. The best part was, most members were simple-minded, no one had the required leadership to keep the squad running. It was getting harder.

Pilot isn't an easy job alright? Sighed the chief. The market was too competitive, those major squads were naturally way better than tiny weeny squads like his, whether concerning reputation, service quality or capabilities. It was a little bit easier in the past for those major squads only would take on the requests befitting to

their organization dimensions, but well, as much as abundance of human resources, those once-in-a-blue-moon major operations no longer sufficed the demand of their squad members. So they began reaching those simple requests from the folks, and of course the tiny weeny squads, like the Papatte, were given a strike again.

When was the last time Papatte Squad got an actual request? Guo the Chief could hardly remember with that atrocious memories of his, as his soulless eyes gazed upon the disorderly, to-be-disbanded squad. And there was this particular request untouched by the other squads, he thought it would be a great fortune to make as he seized support from everybody else in his squad, accepted that request with determination. Although they would be handsomely rewarded, the requests were often associated with alarming tasks, nobody sane would have taken those requests, which resulted them lingering on the billboard for years, since... rewards were priced and life was always priceless.

Now, that one insane person, that one snapped leader called Guo the Old Chief had taken the request. He was in a hobo squad after all, assuming he would survive this time, the money could last for few years in his squad. Damn you these filthy wealthy men! Cursed Guo. Why must we gamble our life for a pot of plant to be viewed by them on a fancy tea party?!

"Sir, what do you think these pests want from us?" muttered Francis Jr. through the communication channel, as he gulped, in his shaking voice.

"Yeah, Francis Jr. has a point, these pests have been only surrounding us, do you think they want to have a dance with us?" Huang the Balloon Head had been exposed to the dead-or-alives countless times, he made a joke, a poor one though, that exposed his bit of restlessness in him.

"I have no idea. Be calm, watch," said the chief.

The mechs they piloted were looking obsolete but one would be

convinced the fact that they had been taken great care by their owners, a loving care in fact, the maintenance was well-done and they moved with immense rappings too.

Well, still a little shabby compared to the Sangs though, those were the real extreme. Commented Ye Chong in his thoughts.

There scattered numerous remnants of mechs, which some of them were raging in sparks. And one could see the pool of blood tainting the body. Obviously they had a conflict, a really bad one. I had seen such beast back in Archipelago. The Sangs called them the Seraphods*. Though I never expected that I would see them in action, at a place like this...

Swarm, surround but no strike. The Seraphods seemed to favor the more sadistic approach in hunting their preys. Ye Chong was surprised over the happening but he was not really the spectating kind, as he began planning, making sure that he had seized all factors under control. "Go." He launched his command of attacking these emerald monsters.

Hsssssk!

Sang Pu did not hesitate and made his move along with the other pumped Sangs upon receiving the command.

Hsssssssssssssssssssssssssssssk!!!

The ear-piercing hush was becoming ear-rupturing. A flawless collaboration of the Sangs this time, as 500 of them broke into 50 teams and accelerated themselves to the maximum, the afterimages impaled the animating ball in hideous green.

The beasts had noticed them, but failed to react in time. Boom! They were done.

All beasts were helpless under the mighty Collisions.

Funny thing was the Sangs did not even bother to take on any of the beasts particularly. The movement they made was merely a fling over the sky, forming a deadly net of their afterimages

intersecting, as the 4 blades on each Collision sliced through the armors of Seraphods.

Hnnnnnnnnnnnnngggggg! Aiiiiiiikkksssss!

The beasts cried painfully, in grief they begged for mercy. The Sangs did not intend to give the beasts the mercy they begged, as the Sangs launched themselves into the deadly web again, crossing over the greenish weak beasts. It was a dense crossing but none of the Sangs was having issue of crashing into each other. Clearly they were well-trained, they were pretty good at piloting.

A rain of blood tinted the area, with inner flesh flying over the broken limbs.

...

...?

The men of the Papatte Squad were having a short-circuit in their mind. The sudden massive strike of the unknown happened so fast that It felt like a sudden slam on the keys during a concerto.

Hnnng....

Two waves of attack by the Sangs and none of those beasts could stand up. Most of them lay on the ground, half-dead with pathetic cries. Nobody would sympathize them. In front of the law of nature, the sympathy of humanity was so foolish to be conducted. The third wave happened and the cries softened, soon silence raided the place.

"The heck had just happened?" Balloon Head was confused.

Blarrghh! Blargh! Ugh!

There was a sound coming from the channel. Francis Jr. was throwing up as the brutality of the scene was too intense for his comprehension. It was too impulsive... a second ago those beasts were still swarming over their mechs and now the beasts were dead on the ground, so dead they could bleed a river. Okay I don't

know who launched the attack but this is kind of cruel. Thought Francis Jr.

Practically speaking, the Sangs were not as cruel as Francis Jr. thought. This was an act of their habit, the result of their lesson over the generations fighting with the beasts as on a few painful occasions the Sangs learned how the beasts would turn more ferocious as they were harmed, so the last blow to take their life was always necessary .

The remaining 4000 Sangs were grumbling in curses at the back. "When we finally got an operation!"

"Then it's done, in 4 seconds!" They had been so eager to have an actual fight but the only opportunity had vanished right before them. If the Collisions were supplied with communicative facility, one could already imagine the waves of angry commentaries flooding the channel.

"When do we have the chance again? HUH!" Poor Hai Lian, as the voice of Sang Tie slammed right onto his ears. Hai Lian could almost hear the echoes right inside himself.

Are they... the pirates? Or the Aristocrats? Speculated Guo but he could not tell.

Pirates? No way. The pirates never wielded such capabilities, if they ever did, the entire He Yue galaxy would have been plunged! The secret team of the Aristocrats? This would be more likely... but they don't seem to have a fixed color code. These greens and reds are reminding me of a circus rather than a group of trained military force of a particular aristocratic family. Sorry to say but these people look really like a bunch of scrappy troops, even scrappier than my own squad too... I don't think those Aristocrats would fancy such mischievous approach in training their men. The Aristocrats are too busy being condescending to people, they do not have time for this.

And I must say, the flying objects were really weird. Thought

Guo the chief. He was right as he immediately recognized the pros of the Collision, though he was getting shocked after one aftershock and another, not because of the mech but because of the required skills to pilot it.

"All of you have been our captives." A young voice rang. The squad was stupefied.

Captives? I could not think of any other group that would use such terminology than the pirates. Are they really pirates?! Deduced Guo in disbelief. Pirates don't serve for the people! They serve for the money! Are these pirates blind? Can't they tell we can't even spare a penny to their cruise?

Well, we don't have anything to offer, take whatever you want - if there's whatever that is. Thought Guo, getting calm.

The Collisions were exerting pressure to their security, as the squad hopped off their cabin obediently.

"Hmm," muttered Ye Chong.

The leader of the pirates was surprisingly younger than I thought. This is literally a child! But wait, I am not going to take it lightly. He is a child yet he's already leading a giant group of pirates. That is convincing enough that he is something. The other members are mainly teenagers and young adults too... Sighs... even child labor got common among the pirates. Thought Guo the Chief, getting sentimental.

Guo was showing full cooperation in his conversation with Ye Chong, knowing his fate of being captured.

Ye Chong, upon seeing these men, was merely having an idea of needing a local who was extremely familiar with He Yue and Papatte happened to be there. Hai Lian and Ye Chong had gone to Foundation city and probably they had been exposed. That was unfavored. It would be hard to even run the routine tasks in the galaxy given that they lacked the locals to help them.

Ye Chong did not have tremendous experience with society but he was thinking thoroughly, all thanks to Mu's education. One would use one's thinking assuming experience could not help.

"We are Papatte, merely a tiny group of pilots, sir."

Upon mentioning "group of pilots", Ye Chong's eyes lustered.

That would be a way.

"Hai Lian...", whispered Ye Chong, "would it be too eye-catching if there was a pilot squad of 5000?"

"Not exactly, sir. It would be a medium-sized group. A squad of 5000 isn't something given that we are in an age where hundred thousands of pilots travelled together in a squad," replied Hai Lian. "There are tons of major squads out there, like Chaniat, that group is expanded, so greatly that they have their own office at almost all planets in He Yue. Not even the Aristocrats would want to mess with them, they are one of the major forces here."

"Very well." And in one order, the Papatte Squad got their first new 5000 members, with Guo remained on his throne, although he was very much aware that the throne was no longer his.

"Yes sir, thank you sir," replied Guo, as threatened by the cold gaze of the blades.

It was not that bad though, he knew what he was there for. He was an adornment, a cover for the pirates. Well it would be easier in that case. "Here you go, sir," he said as he handed over the last few pennies in their box. His hands were shaking, not because of a heavy heart parting with them, rather it was because he finally got to pass this accursed economy of Papatte to someone else. Of course he would have handed this puzzling, tiring and pointless errand to lead the team! He would be too dumb if he still seized that broken flag of Papatte! Finally, he got a chance to slack off. He did not have any ambition, he just wanted to live in leisure.

Let the big men do their big job...

Thought Guo, his expression looking sentimental, while his heart being overjoyed.

And Ye Chong could already feel his headache.

Chapter 289: Rippling Orchid

"So what brought you guys here?" asked Hai Lian, confused, especially after seeing the gears Guo and his squad brought. With those gears, Guo would be as good as dead stepping into Calamitous Asteroid Belt. Hai Lian thought he was poor enough, till he saw the Papatte.

Guo was blushing while his balloon-headed friend shouted, "Because of money, what else? Who else would come to this cursed place?"

"All of you actually took a request here?" Hai Lian could not believe his ears as his eyes went wide. Did they really disregard their capabilities and took up a deadly request here? Hai Lian had been a freelancer long enough to understand the working of the billboard. Every single request associated with the Calamitous Asteroid Belt was immediately ignored by most sane people, as those requests were easily the most dangerous requests ever. Nobody would take those. Wow these men actually came all the way here to die? Not even the elites of the major squads would have the courage to accept the request.

Look what poverty had done to humanity. Save poverty, people!

"Mhm, pretty much." Nodded Guo helplessly, "We are just here for a plant called the Rippling Orchid but sigh... laugh all you want, we are hobos you see. We would be disbanding in starvation if we never take up any more request."

"I see. Now that explains it." Nodded Hai Lian, who was informed about the competitiveness in the market, but he simply did not imagine it to be this tedious.

"Excuse me, what is this thing you called 'Rippling Orchid'?" asked Sang Fan in curiosity.

"A decorative plant. Not much of value." No one would have

expected the answer to come from Ye Chong.

It was surprisingly to hear it from Ye Chong as he did not look like the kind who would admire the beauty of decorative plants. Not even elderlies like Guo and his men had heard of this goofy Rippling Orchid in their life before taking up the request.

Well, Ye Chong was still an alchemist and that encyclopedia given by Lunatic Guan had all the records he needed, including Rippling Orchid, which he had remembered by heart. The entry for Rippling Orchid was brief though, it seemed to be a material to produce hallucinogen? That was an overrated plant indeed. Commented Ye Chong, as he thought this hard-to-find plant was too demotivating for its capability. He could simply name a few other plants which were more common and would do probably the same as Rippling Orchid.

"Who said it is not much of value! A sprout of Rippling Orchid could cost 50,000 points!" Argued Francis Jr., blushed.

"Fifty thousands what?" Screamed everybody. How much are fifty thousand points you asked? Hai Lian was already stunned upon knowing Sang Fan's Lavagold dagger being priced at 30,000 points. And that little plant for ornamental purpose could go for 50,000 points?

And people began coveting this plant, even Ye Chong was feeling a sudden urge. How in the world! Would this stupid plant! Worth 50,000 points!? How many mechs do I need to sell to even get 50,000 points?!

To be frank, all of them were practically hobos, be it Ye Chong and the Sangs or the Papatte. They were so poor that they would want to sell themselves.

"This is the Rippling Orchid," said Guo as he projected the visual of the plant.

A tender little sprout with thick broad leaves flipping like a

gentle breeze, the slender stem was colorful, the petals too were unique, as they were forming a perfect circle, with lines over them like ripples.

Okay, that's a good-looking flower. Still, how! In the world! It would! Worth 50,000 points?!

"Is it near?" asked Ye Chong, since the encyclopedia did not state the habitation of Rippling Orchid.

"Yes, according to the info given by the requester. The last sprout was discovered in this area, so we came to try our luck," stated Guo.

"Sang Pu, send half of our men to find this plant," ordered Ye Chong as he pointed at the visual. 50,000 points, you got to be kidding me, I am so getting this plant. Thought Ye Chong. It would be a dangerous request for mere folks, but it would be simple for Ye Chong.

"Yes sir." Nodded Sang Pu agreeably. Being the frontline commander of the 5000 men, he was manically passionate over armory but any piece inside the armory would require currencies, which soon he redirected his focus onto finances instead.

Everyone of Papatte had joined Sang Pu to search for Rippling Orchid other than Guo.

There remained about two thousand men resting at the spot. They had been traveling nonstop for the past few days and they would certainly take this golden opportunity to leave their cabin at once and have some good old-fashioned face-to-face conversations without having to shout. There were still a few skeptical ones stuck in their cabin though. Soon the Sangs formed a lively crowd of chatters, where they would sit in circles, eagerly proceeded with their recreational activity - Wrestling. As much as the word had implied, it basically suggested a game of hand-to-hand combat between anyone in interest within the circle.

"Go! Go!"

"Woo!"

Traveling in the space with the most fundamental facilities was absolutely boring them to death. And finally they got the chance to have fun, the wrestling session was intense, there were screams and overjoyed hurrahs.

The changes in the Guo's expression were grabbing the interest of Ye Chong, it was rather dramatic to his taste as it literally underwent a metamorphosis from grimness to surprise to disbelief.

It did feel like a dream for Guo the Old Chief as he watched the group of people started fighting on each other in a simple stage they created with their formation. It was not a nightmare but it was not a pleasant dream either.

The two men in the circle were demonstrating astonishing techniques. He simply did not foresee to witness great practitioners right here! Those skills, Guo - although he did not wield even the standard moves - could confidently state them to be of the level of the top few most pilots in the major squads, only the top few, a tiny handful of them. And there he was, seeing a random two persons from a 5000 army of nowhere doing superior martial arts techniques.

He thought it was the nature's law of strongest to the weak.

But the following participants were sending him more shockers.

He almost could feel his cheek twitching.

The combat remained as intense as ever with the following entries.

How the... Guo could not process what was happening. Don't tell me all of them just so happened to be the greatest fighters? Thought Guo as he looked at the wrestling men in blank dismay. 2000 greatest fighters? Two thousands of them? At here? Guo

wanted to deny his speculation but the reality seemed to be what he exactly speculated.

He tried shrugging such terrifying thought off.

"Sir..." He shot a glance, with much consideration, "About our base... where... umm is it?" He carefully asked.

"Base? What base? We don't have a base." A direct answer from Ye Chong, there was no hesitation from his side.

"No base?" Stunned Guo was, his mouth widely opened. Did you just tell me that you travelled with 5000 men around the galaxy without a base? Even the space pirates have a place to rest their voyages, how?

"Hah... I see...", replied Guo wryly, "While Papatte is a mere squad with no base as well, I wonder where sir would like to take a rest on?"

"The Gray Valley. That's our planned destination," stated Ye Chong flatly.

"Gray Valley?" Guo's face was colorless, "You can't go there. It's too dangerous!"

"I see? Very dangerous?" asked Ye Chong interestingly.

"Yes, very dangerous!" Asserted Guo, "I once have a mate who travelled there. He was a way better fighter than me but the moment he got there, he seemed to have vanished. The next time I was heard of him was about his death three months later. And he's the third dead person among my mates." Guo was grim.

"This dangerous?" Ye Chong was shocked. Frankly speaking, Ye Chong had seen quite a few pilots in Foundation city and all of them were quite strong in his opinion, even when put under comparison with those pilots from the 5 major galaxies he came. If the mortality remained that high even with their skills, the Gray Valley would be indeed dangerous.

"Yes sir. No one would understand the deadliness of the Gray Valley unless they had set foot upon it. Did sir once have a dispute with any of the Aristocrats?" asked Guo strangely, since technically only those who showed indifference or had bad blood once with the Aristocrats would head to the Gray Valley.

"Well... only the three major ones I supposed," stated Ye Chong indifferently.

Only? The three aristocrats? Of all families this man actually picked a fight with the three greatest ones in the entire galaxy? And it did not sound like it was merely a case with one or two families judging by his wording. But well, Guo never knew the very culprit who had caused a war between the 8 Jie experts and the 3 aristocrats was standing right in front of him. This was because he got misled by the number of Jie experts involved. There were 8 of them in the case, and 8, for Jie experts, was more than enough to cause an evacuation in the local galaxy.

So did this guy hold 5000 Jie experts in the dark?

Guo felt he had snapped at some point.

"Maybe we could head for alternatives... like a more backward planet?" suggested Guo.

"Oh?"

Ye Chong was sending a stare that Guo was feeling the chill again, "Technically..." He quickly elaborated himself, "The forces of the Aristocrats might be very influential but not influential enough to affect the entire galaxy. There should be a few underdeveloped planets which aren't really aware of the Aristocrats. We could go there for now. As long as we be careful, the residents, the Aristocrats shouldn't be alarmed." As he explained he could feel his nervousness fading away.

Ye Chong started pondering.

"With our strength, yes, it might not be a problem if we wanted

to explore the Gray Valley, but..." He glanced at Ye Chong, "We lacked one essential - funds. Yes, I admit I do not know much about the inside of Gray Valley but I know our operation won't work anywhere in the galaxy as long as we have nothing in our wallet."

"You made some points," nodded Ye Chong approvingly, since his men were armed with the most fundamental model of mechs. The Sangs might be formidable against the beasts but not against humanity. Humans were eventually the smarter opponent than the beasts. Ye Chong could not guarantee a victory if they were to face a group of real pilots out there.

It would in fact be a bad timing to go Gray Valley at the moment.

Seeing how Ye Chong was showing approval, Guo was not feeling the slightest pride. He was bewildered instead, as realizing the motive of this mysterious group being not joining any forces but to make an escape. Sighs, his bad day did not seem to be ending just yet. He did not have a choice however, if he showed anything else than cooperation, he knew what could happen to him.

Maybe this would still be a better path than handling all those tedious works leading a bunch of unmotivated squad members himself.

"Sir! Sir! We have found it! We found the flower!" Sang Pu's voice was expressing joy.

...

"Hmmmmm?"

Fan Qing rested on her fluffy seat, as her dreamy eyes set upon the green tea engulfed within the columns of evaporations. The scent travelled through the air and tickled her senses. She was waiting for someone and that someone had about 30 minutes left till the time of their meeting. She came earlier anyway, it was her habit being proactive in an exchange after all.

She thought back the investigation on Papatte Squad. She

researched the squad to discover the fact that it turned out to be a tiny squad consisted about 80 men, while also performing rather mediocrely in their records. She even checked out the list of requests they had completed before, which most of them turned out the most basic, simplest child's play in her eyes. A half-star rating also justified the fact that they were just some rowdy ruffs from nowhere.

Being discouraged by the facts, she started to forget about her request. Probably only the hobos would go for the mission when they were starving on their last few meals.

"Hm?"

And then she got a notification from the squad itself.

"REQUEST COMPLETED."

She was being skeptical the whole time. It was an underwhelming squad handling an overwhelming mission, chances are they should not be surviving at all. But she in fact got a notification from them. Although she believed these little rascals would not have the courage to mess with the Fan family she belonged, she prepared a cluster of guards around the corner anyway.

She took a look at the time. 5 minutes till meeting and nobody was there. Fan Qing frowned, being one who abided by time, she disgraced the late comers.

One more minute.

Nobody was there.

I am leaving the moment this last minute ticked. I'm not going to wait.

30 seconds left.

Her expression was stern as she took a careful sip on her tea. Her men at the corners were showing anxiety upon seeing that

expression of hers. It was a definite anger and everyone knew what would happen when you enraged the influential figure of an influential family.

Chapter 290: A Walkthrough on Planet Yi Ju

The door to the tea room was whammed open, as a queue of people hurried in after. No doubt, the leading one was Guo Ren. She recognized him at first glance, her research was not done or nothing after all. She took a look on the time, yup, 15 seconds before the time was up.

Fan Qing's expression softened, as she stood up, with a smile, "Punctuality is a virtue, Mr. Guo and it looks like you possess such virtue."

"Sorry for the wait, Miss Fan," laughed Guo the chief.

"It's alright. Your squad had ventured into the darkest zone of the galaxy for our family, it would be uncourteous if we could not hold that little more anticipation. By the way, who are these, may I ask?" Said she as her glance went upon the 5 silver-masked men at the back, which one of them was rather tall while the rest were a little stout by standards, though the rest looked leaner than the tall one. Well, all 5 of them still depicted that heroic imagery.

Clearly these men were not from the Papatte formerly. Their steps were firm, which great strength could be sensed within. Fan Qing was astonished inside, though she really disliked the pretentious outfits, she did not express her feeling directly.

"These men were the newest members in our squad. And thanks to them we completed your request smoothly. My apology for their apparel, these were some weird traditions in their tribes apparently. Hahaha, since they swore a stern vow of chastity that only their legal other half could view their appearance. Tolerance would be appreciated, Miss Fan," introduced Guo. The five men were firing their glances around, mainly on the disguised bodyguards Fan Qing had around, which made her heart skip a beat.

"Aw, you are being too formal. Hah, it looks like the squad is

doing really, really well. Congratulations I guess?" There were all sorts of tribes in the galaxy, while they also practiced extraordinary traditions, so she could understand that.

The truth was, it was pure cooked-up crap. A good excuse though, it was a scheme suggested by Francis Jr. - five thousands men wearing a silver mask each, with Ye Chong and the other exposed 8 members hiding within, it would be a miraculous jackpot if anyone could discern them in one glance. The masks were not as costly as the real silver but a purchase in bulk always gets more cost than discount. Thus, Ye Chong crafted his own masks for the moment, just a measly five of them, and he brought 4 men along for the meeting, whom never were exposed at Foundation before. All for the safety.

"Compliment's appreciated but we are still nothing compared to the great Fan family." Guo was real experienced in negotiation, as he made a perfect turn, "Well, Miss Fan, for the expansion of both of our families, shall we talk?"

"Right."

"We have acquired the Rippling Orchid upon your request," Guo took a sip on the tea, "But the situation turned out to be... a little different than what we have imagined..." The words were slow.

"A little different? What is it I wonder?" Sounds like the catchphrase she had grown up seeing for a typical daylight robbery.

"We thought we were blessed with great fortune for we found one sprout of it. However, the Lady Luck seemed to have smiled at us that day, as we found three sprouts at a time. What a surprise." Stated Guo calmly.

"THREE?" Shrieked Fan Qing as she sprung up from her seat. Her expressive eyes were filled with incredulity.

The sudden scream alerted her guards around, as they thought

something had gone wrong and rushed to her side, circling the entire scene. Meanwhile, Guo remained nonchalantly on his seat, sipping his tea, as if no other uninvited guest had joined their tea party.

Fan Qing, feeling awkward of the unnecessary alarm, waved her guards away, covering her face, "My regrets for my misconduct. And all these unnecessary staging." She wiped her sweat and regained her expression, though her heart still raced faster than ever, as her mind replayed the very scene she saw the hideous glare from one of those masked men.

"Hahaha! It's alright, caution is a long-lost virtue, Miss Fan. I do have faith in the working of Fan family." The response was prompt, though Fan Qing knew it was merely a line on the courtesy act, she kind of grew upon the man.

"I'm getting all the Rippling Orchid you have. Two million points. How do the great man think?" She was truly keen on those sprouts.

One for 500,000, and 3 for 2,000,000, sounds like a deal for me. Thought Guo as he glanced at Ye Chong, "You sure know how to do business, Miss Fan, it's an honor to trade with you. Very well, that would be it."

The quick glance by Guo was captured by Fan Qing, "Thank you for you and your impeccable squad."

One masked man came to her with a specimen cabinet. She tried seeing through the mask but she knew she should not be doing that at the moment, as she quickly withdrew her eyes back onto the cabinet, which contained exactly 3 sprouts of Rippling Orchids.

Her eyes were shaking. These barbarians actually knew to use a specimen cabinet to store these precious plants? "Your squad is much more interesting than I thought."

"HAH!" Chuckled Guo. I guess wealthy family is wealthy after all,

2 millions points vaporized and she does not seem to care. Sigh, only if I am as wealthy.

"Our squad would be heading to Planet Yi Ju. If you have any inquiry, or would like to have more deals with us, please, do not hesitate," smiled Guo brightly.

Their destination was surprising to her ears. Of all planets, Yi Ju? Why that undeveloped globe? A place without technology would be a bad nest for the squad of pilots like his. While Papatte should be more potent than I have expected, a potent squad like Papatte should be heading to a more populated planet to build their foundation. Then... why Yi Ju?

"Your plan being...?" Confused Fan Qing was.

"I understand your concern..." Smiled Guo, "We have recruited a new batch of members quite recently you see. And we would need a more spacious base for training, since we are still very lagging behind compared to most squads out there, we have to pick a less populated planet like Yi Ju. Obviously because you know... we would love to have an easier ground to stand."

"You're so modest!" Complimented Fan Qing emptily, though she did not buy that explanation.

The trade was a happy one anyway.

Two millions points were undoubtedly an astronomical figure to a single person, till it was thrown to a pack of 5000 wolves. You still thought it was still great? A single Moonlight piloted by Hai Lian would cost 30 grand, with that in the equation, 2 millions points could only get around 60 Moonlights. And Moonlight was quite a basic model too.

Well at least it was their first successful business, the tribe was happy, the squad was happy.

Let's see. A dimensional keystone would be 2,000 points. A communication device would be 3,000. The detection system

though, was slightly more costly, a whopping 5,000 points. These were still the entry gears... which none of them were really superior in performance. A heartbreaking price it was to Ye Chong as he missed those days with Mu Shang's hacking to the gate.

Gearing one Collision would cost 10 grand. In the end Ye Chong decided to invest a million on gearing 100 Collisions in his hand. Technically these Collisions would be for their basic living - running missions of course. The remaining a million... well Ye Chong would not want to make a blind purchase, as he heard Guo Ren's estimated expenditure on Yi Ju - apparently even on a nearly isolated planet, building a base that could accommodate 5000 men would cost more than a million by any chance.

Where are the points when I need them? Like where?! Screamed Ye Chong inside.

He could not rush. Everything must go according to plans. Be it the search for Mu Shang or the way back to the 5 major galaxies, Ye Chong found difficulties at the moment. He got to use his patience to slowly grow his forces. He thought of Virtual World but sadly it was not a thing in He Yue seemingly, not really a common facility. The galaxy did have several servers but those were exclusive to the Aristocrats or the major squads built for their needs.

Furthermore, they did not need Virtual World somehow, the technological advancement was more advanced than the galaxies he came from, that Ye Chong even started suspecting if there would be Photon Stimulated Intelligence as powerful as Mu Shang, or better, Mu Shang was actually originated from this galaxy! Assuming those were true, it would be too risky to log into the Virtual World for now.

Tsk, Ye Chong lacked a practical way to contact Mu Shang. He got to let it go for now. Habitually his calm thoughts replaced his tensed emotions. Given that Mu Shang still survived and obviously they would, he did not have to worry for them, he should be

worrying for himself in fact.

He got to ensure his survival in He Yue first - a feasible target at the moment. His situation was looking bad but he had experienced worse, so... no worries!

...

"Welcome to Terry City." They had arrived at Terry City, a city with a population about 3 millions. Nothing particularly fancy about it. City like this was everywhere over Planet Yi Ju. The location of Yi Ju was somewhere at one corner of the galaxy, situated towards the edge of Calamitous Asteroid Belt. That was not only the reason for its unpopularity, the resources, specifically the minerals, were considerably barren. Technologically and economically speaking, it was tragedy. Plantation farming was the sole pillar to support the economy, although the residents were fortunate to have planted a few unique fruits known to the outside world, thanks to their climate. The catch was, as far as they were from the heart of the galaxy, it would take forever to transport their crops for fortune. Merchants once showed interests but were then shunned away by the outrageous cost to even get the business running. So Yi Ju remained as barren as ever.

And Nedved woke up one morning to see a few strangers residing in his farm. With those silver masks, they really looked dubious. The entire neighborhood was gossiping the happening. Everyone knew Nedved's plan of migration, as well as the renting of his land, more importantly. They coveted this large piece of plain, with a god-saved earth in one piece. The sun and the water were both great, anything could be imagined as a good harvest.

The next thing the neighbors realized, Nedved happily left the place. The masked outsiders actually purchased the entire land, without a sound made. The neighbors were naturally gossip-lovers but they never wanted the new men to join. Even the dumb cowboy at one side could tell the masked men being potentially malicious. Their gestures, be it a wave or a swing, all of them

looked rough. The time when they first came to Nedved's farm, it was as if a raid of the space pirates, thousands of mechs zoomed to his place and landed in sequence. They almost alarmed the police, till they saw old Nedved acting fine towards them.

Well, Yi Ju, as poor as it was, nobody cared about it, not even the space pirates.

Ever since the strangers arrived, they had been rooted in their home. It was as if they did not need to eat or to sleep. Right when several theories were brewing at the futile chatters in the neighborhood, a few teams of construction workers rushed into the farm and built a Great Wall enveloping the entire place. It took 10 days till the workers came out, exhausted.

So what the heck are these weirdoes doing?

Few days later, projection was made at the door. PAPATTE, the seven-lettered word was bright and clear. And everyone realized, it was actually a pilot squad joining their neighborhood.

Well, Ye Chong was worrying on his finance. His base was only half-done, while the bank account was almost empty. The saving grace was... the food here was surprisingly dirt-cheap, at least he did not have to worry how to feed 5000 mouths every day.

They got to get some works to do now. They would be starving in no time if they never headed out for new requests. So he led Guo and Sang Fan with other men, headed to the local office in Terry City.

The office was, as similar as the atmosphere of the planet itself, poorly decorated. A short building pitiful to the eyes, compared to those offices Ye Chong had seen on other planets before. It felt like he had been sent 500 years backwards. He gave a knock and entered, to see the few lazy men slothfully walking around. The billboard which contained the request? It was as numerous as those men. A pitiful few of them. The price? Don't ask it, you will cry.

But they did not seem to have much options there. Survival would be the topmost priority, while stealthiness throned the second. What's wrong if we were to live tougher? At least we are still alive and kicking? Compared to the Archipelago, this planet was heaven. On the other than, the Papatte was agreeably joining either, they had been at the bottommost of society long enough, this was their bread and butter.

The squad needed money, lots and lots and lots of money. As far as Ye Chong was informed, every man of his did not manage to fulfill their basic allocated resources. Assuming 10,000 points for each other, he would need 5 millions points, just for food and daily necessity. Ye Chong also thought of devices for mech, but every single piece of them would go by a price of 8 digits at the very least. Sigh, now thinking back, what luxury it was back when I build the Coxcomb. Three labs of three different sets of the best apparatuses, astronomically priced. And now I could not even buy a nut of it.

He consulted Guo after taking a glance at the requests on the billboard. He accepted every single request that seemed doable at the moment, which most of them required a dense man force, doing some obsolete works with pitiful pay - that had justified why no squad on Yi Ju would want to do them.

Nevertheless, Ye Chong did not lack the man force. His men were bored either as they succumbed to continuous training to kill the time, fortunately they had the walls to keep them low, so they would not give heart attacks to the elderlies next door. The victims, most likely wold be Francis Jr. and his mates, as they felt like a lamb into a pen of wolves. This was because Sang Pu could not bear to see their incapability in even the most basic combats so he forced them into training.

And that, was how, the miserable tales of Francis Jr. and his happy mates began.

In front of one anomaly, you would feel plain; In front of fifty? You probably feel why you existed.

Sang Fan and the rest remained loitering at the city to try finding some fortune, while Ye Chong headed back to the base alone.

Chapter 291: Brother and Sister

Strolling by the road, Mi Su and Mi Qi were enjoying the scenery around them, which differed from the view they grew up seeing, with tall buildings frequented by flocks and flocks of mechs. They almost forgot the time to head home, and a man at his middle-aged, carrying luggages were right behind.

"No wonder uncle wouldn't want to leave, I too feel like staying here forever," said Mi Qi. For an educated man at the age of seventeen, he was rather handsome, his gestures could justify his background too. There were gazes from ladies all over the place, from time to time. And Mi Qi, seemingly used to it, showed negligence towards the phenomena around.

"Well, uncle had been working really hard over his life. Now he really could use some decent rest at a place like this. It is delightful to see him feeling happy here," approved Mi Su, being the elder sister of Mi Qi. They had been good brother and sister ever since they were born in the same family.

Beep. Beep. Beep.

The communicator rang on the wrist of the middle-aged man. The brother and sister held their steps and looked at him approving transmission, whispering briefly and pulling a long face after.

"Uncle Yun, is there anything wrong?" stated Mi Su.

"Lady," Bowed Uncle Yun, "The clan's intelligence had reported a restless activity in Lunaris. Pirates had appeared apparently."

"Lunaris?" Frowned Mi Qi, "Isn't that place where we need to pass to our destination?"

"Yes sir, the leader had sent a few more men, all for the safety," stated Uncle Yun.

Their trip this time was to pay their great uncle a visit. While

their great uncle appreciated the visit of his two young relatives, he did not fancy the visit of a crowd to his home, so the brother and sister did not bring anybody else than their loyal butler on their journey. The plot twist though, was unexpectedly the bloodshed of Foundation between the Jie experts and the Aristocrats. So rather than having those worried guardsmen by their side, they instead sent these men out to hear about the incident, while they - under the accompaniment of their childhood caregiver, Uncle Yun - would pretend as some random tourists on the spaceship. It was a smooth sail to Yu Ju.

"Brother..." Hesitated Mi Su, "How about we move few days later?"

"No way!" Rejected Mi Su right away, "The trial is just around the corner, being the son of the leader I could not be a latecomer."

Mi Su remained silent, she knew her brother. Having the personality from his father, whenever the clan was mentioned, he would be this stern and dead serious.

"It looks like we would need more men," concluded Uncle Yun, pessimistically. The young master and mistress had been under his care since birth, so he also caught on Mi Su's temper.

"Though I wonder..." Frowned Mi Su, "I wonder of what standard the pilots here are... If there's a squad somewhere...conveniently."

To this statement Uncle Yun responded nothing, in his mind he had already confirmed the standard of the pilots here, the economy here had told everything, as affirmed by his experience being in the outside world, unlike young master and mistress who grew up in a well-guarded lawn.

But it did not look like he had any alternative either. They really needed to employ few more men.

Beep! Beeeeeeep!

The communicator rang again, but it was Mi Su's this time.

A glance on the caller's ID brought a smile upon Mi Su's face, "Yes? Sister Qing?" Mi Su jumped to the other corner of the street the moment he heard the most frightful name of the entire galaxy. Uncle Yun was finding the scene funny.

"Sister Qing, you got home?" Fan Qing's hologram was on the communicator clear, although the forceful lady was currently stretching on her bed. Yes, Fan family had always been in good relation with Mi family since the brother and sister were born. All three of them had been great playmates since childhood, the brother and sister would frequent the room of Fan Qing back then.

"Yeah, like I finally finished the task this time. Sissie, hehehe, you won't be able to guess which squad did it!" The lady sounded proud, well only in front of her fellow good mates. No acquaintance would see that ladylike side of hers.

Mi Su being her playmate for years knew what the sister wanted to play, "Douglas? Could it be?" Douglas was a well-known pilot squad, the squad did not consist of a large number of members but they were surely all elites. The entry test to their squad was extremely harsh apparently. It would be a solid proof of strength if one was able to join them. As there were only a few members, Douglas hardly accepted requests on major operation. Instead, they aimed those tough, super tough missions that did not require a pack of nonsense but a well team of royal flush like them. Those missions were tough, so obviously they got paid handsomely too.

"Douglas? No!" Shook Fan Qing, she had dealt with Douglas a few times before, so she knew which Douglas the girl was mentioning.

"Ummmm... Trilobita?" The next name rolled in, which associated with a major pilot squad, with expansive forces over the galaxy; the leader Luo Ru Feng was a public figure, very sociable among the forces, including Mi and Fan family.

"Hohoho... Nope."

"Well I don't know...", said softly Mi Su, with a smile. Her

memory only contained these two names befitting to her sister's standard, they were the frequent squads in business too.

"I knew you can't guess it. Let me give you a hint," giggled Fan Qing, "Half a star. The rating."

"Half? A star?" Mi Su almost screamed, "What can a half-starred pilot squad do?" Mi Su might not be fully aware of the outside world but she knew the basic - the rating of a squad would be directly dependent on their performance in completed tasks. Those squads with half a star were mostly at the bottom of the entire food web. The elite squads like Trilobita and Douglas for example, would be flaunting those sparkling five stars of theirs at the public.

"That's what I thought too at the beginning. But they somehow got new members, and they were very much stronger. You know what, they found Rippling Orchids, back and alive, with 3 of them."

"Three Rippling Orchids?" Mi Su covered her mouth in shock. She knew the value of Rippling Orchid, it was almost priceless and rare. She also knew how Fan Qing took forever to find them and now someone from nowhere got it, three of them. Fan Qing carried on, stretching her perfect curves again, "Guess what, they are heading to Yi Ju. They aren't going for the developed planets. Aren't this strange you feel?"

"Yi Ju?" Everyone rose their eyebrows.

"Yeah, I have no idea why they would want to go that sh*tty place," swore Fan Qing, very naturally on her temper.

"Sigh, Sister Qing, you just swore again," said Mi Su, shaking her head, "Well Yi Ju is still a pretty planet, brother and I are right here right now. So how strong they are, sister?" Rebutted Mi Su.

"Hmmmmmm...", pondered Fan Qing, "I dunno. But I think they aren't weak, just... weird. Those new strange masked men who

came along for the meeting that day ain't looking bad though."

"Masked men?" What a weird title.

"Yeah, weird isn't it? The leader said it was their traditional practice, with special emphasis on the practice of chastity, vowing to death not to show faces to anybody else than their other half. Hah, Mi Su I got a brilliant idea, you should really take their mask off, see if they would fulfill their vow of death on you and perish along. Right, they would be dragging you to a hall nearby and get their tribal chief to declare both of you husband and wife. Hahahahahahahahahahaha! How romantic!" The lady was rolling back and fro on her bed.

"Would you be serious at once!" Mi Su gave an eye-roll, "Sister Qing, do you have their contacts though?"

"Oh why Mi Su? Why would you want that?" Held her laugh, Fan Qing looked confused.

Mi Su then briefed Sister Qing the situation, which caused the sister's face to drain, "Hm..." Pondered her again, "You could go for a try. They were a little weird that is. I'm not sure but just make sure you don't expose your identity. Sadly I don't have any pilot on duty there or both of you would not have to bear with this foreignness."

"Okay, understood~" answered Mi Su nicely.

"By the way, how was Qiqi?" asked Fan Qing.

"AWWWWWWWWW!" Qiqi's face was twitching, as he covered his stomach wailing, "My stomach, ouch, I'm running, kay thanks bye!" Then he stampeded away, like the deer upon seeing the carnivore.

"Hahahahaha..." Mi Su was giggling, while Fan Qing, "Hmph!" was angry, "This stupid Qiqi!"

...

... ..

Deep inside the isolated, long valley of mountain, a spaceship was parked there. The six letters were gasping weakly in the jungle, with their letters hardly discernible, "COXCOMB". The body of the spaceship was technically torn, distortion could be seen everywhere.

Inside the Coxcomb... Little Rock was performing calculation, while Zhu Ling was checking out the Overwing. The ace mech of the Sanctuary was now a toy in her hand. Qiu Man was sitting there silently, with Lian Yue being at the side with a look of a No.1 fan, muttered constantly. If there was someone with good hearing there... the content would be...

"Such perfect chin. Such curve lovingly gorgeous for a throat of a fair lady."

"Your snowy skin, your scented breath, your gaze captivates me, tsk, tsk, tsk, the ultimate loot for the living men."

...

"Strange. Why did that line feel so familiar?" Mu's mechanical eyes shone upon the scenery outside.

...

...

The elder of the Sanctuary was having a headache at the situation now. Everything grew more intense and his forces were torn around. The few best teams he sent to scout that primary planet never returned ever since, not even messages were heard. He was feeling bad about the situation, he had sent 5 batches away but they just disappeared like a rock into the river. The planet was as if a distortion disc, a black hole, that would engulf everything at once...

What happened...

When he was facing the lack of workforce, the authority sent him a new order, of withdrawing all ace pilots including Feng Su right back to the HQ. He was shocked of course, it was the first time seeing the authority required that much of forces that urgently in his entire life.

But well, all he could do was to laugh bitterly and send his last few forces back.

...

"What? They don't allow visitors? Excuse me?" Mi Su was shocked.

"Yeah!! I was like, 'could you please let us in, have a look at the office?' and they were like, 'No!' with a slam on the door!" Mi Su was angry, stampeding the ground, "I have never been so insulted in my entire life!"

"That's really weird," muttered Mi Su.

"Indeed," added Uncle Yun, "Normally a squad would not refuse visits as this would be a good opportunity for the squad to demonstrate their strength to convince their clients to take them."

"So did they accept our request anyway?" Tilted Mi Su's head, asked.

"Well! They say, 'we will talk about this on our meeting'."

Guo the old chief was snorting at the local office, then he was wakened up by a communication by someone claiming to be under recommendation of Fan Qing. Of course the man was overjoyed, but then the demand of visitation was a puzzlement... "How do you think?" He consulted Ye Chong for final opinion and certainly, a low-profiled man like Ye Chong would decline directly.

No way I would say yes to that. My base has mechs, only mechs, nothing else. And my 5000 men were almost as strong as the Jie experts, and any real expert could identify them in the tiniest gesture. If I ever let the visitors in, it would alarm the entire galaxy

in no time!

I do need money, but not to an extent I would lose sense of my security. I picked Yu Ju mainly because it was towards the edge of Calamitous Asteroid Belt, if anything would go wrong, I would be able to evacuate my team back into the belt anytime.

Ye Chong was right, the Calamitous Asteroid Belt was a natural maze, with complicated landscapes that would confuse the foes from teaming up against them. And nobody else was more familiar with the asteroid belt than the Sangs. And there was Red Sea, with Archipelago. They had a perfect hiding spot between Archipelago and Yu Ju.

Never flaunt your own strength.

Ye Chong learned the lesson the hard way before.

Well, if the real leader said so, Guo the leader in disguise could only respond with a nod. He could imagine the frustration of the client though, as according to the practice of pilot squads, such decline would be a bald on the record, a blatant disrespect. Moreover, the client was under Fan Qing, the lady who just gave them 2,000,000 points for a few sprouts of plant. Clearly the client was something.

Sigh, the business is off I guess.

Guo ended the transmission and carried on his forty winks.

Chapter 292: The Job

Sang Fan and the rest remained at ease, sitting with their eyes closed. Old Chief Guo was secretly impressed by these mysterious mech pilots. They had the looks of a world class pilot, at least in terms of patience. Old Chief Guo had seen Sang Fan's true face. By his judgment, the young man and their leader had a deep relationship. Of course, the seasoned Old Chief Guo acted accordingly.

The door of the commission center opened. Everyone looked up, and immediately perked up. The mech pilots loitering about the main lobby of the commission center may not be on the same level as the Sang tribe members in terms of strength, but they had a much sharper eye for customers. They knew from the behaviour and clothing of the three people entering the lobby that they were rich.

Business time! The slacking mech pilots immediately picked themselves up and rushed forward, offering multitudes of flattery. Only Old Chief Guo, Sang Fan and company did not move. Old Chief Guo took a glance at the three and immediately ignored them. As for the rest, they did not even open their eyes.

Of the three who came, one was a beautiful and genial lady. She was surrounded by the most prospectors.

The three were Mi Qi, Mu Si and Uncle Yun. While they were unhappy with the way the Papatte mech squad treated them, they did not have much of a choice. Hence, they came to have a look anyway.

Mi Qi frowned in distaste; Mi Su wore her usual thin smile; Uncle Yun adopted a flat expression. He took a step forward and tactfully pushed outwards. The gathering crowd immediately felt huge pressure, and quickly stepped back.

Old Chief Guo whistled softly at the performance. He could see

that the middle-aged man's move was smart and powerful. While he did not know how it worked, it was undeniably an ingenious way of controlling one's strength.

Sang Fan and others opened their eyes simultaneously and took a quick glance at the middle-aged man, but quickly shut their eyes again. To them, the technique was ingenious, but not very particularly useful.

The other mech pilots might not be the cream of the crop, but they were seasoned enough. By the looks of the middle-aged man standing in front of the young man and lady, they knew that all hope was lost, and retreated with resignation.

Mi Qi looked around the lobby, and began to approach Old Chief Guo. Old Chief Guo and his company were standing out too much, being the only ones who did not act on their arrival. Besides, the three people with silver masks on would be conspicuous anyway in this small lobby.

Uncle Yun's eyes gleamed the moment they landed with Sang Fan and the other two. He quickly went to Mi Qi and whispered to his ear, "Careful, my lord, the three masked people are strong!"

Mi Qi paused in his advance, startled. He was familiar with Uncle Yun's strength. The man rarely described people as strong, not since Mi Qi was young. As such, he was surprised that Uncle Yun would call all three of the masked people as strong! However, he quickly recovered himself. Wasn't this exactly what they needed? A mech squad that could enlist three capable combat experts must be good.

Compared to mech pilots, combat experts were less helpful. Hence, in any mech squad, hiring combat experts would not be their top priority. They were often hired only when the mech squad could afford extra manpower.

Old Chief Guo stood up. Sang Fan and the others immediately opened their eyes and took a few seemingly casual steps that

brought them around Old Chief Guo, surrounding him in the center. Ye Chong's orders were for them to protect Guo Ren.

"Is this the Papatte Mech Squad?" Mi Qi asked. The group was too easy to recognize. Their silver masks were exactly as Sister Qing had told him.

Old Chief Guo replied with a laugh, "Yes, it is. And who might you be, sirs and lady?"

Mi Qi smiled softly in his soothing aristocratic demeanor. "We are the client who contacted you this morning."

"Oh," Old Chief Guo was surprised, but quickly gathered himself. "Haha, so it's a customer, please forgive me."

Mi Qi decided then and there to hire the Papatte Mech Squad. From the man's behaviour, he was certain that the mech squad was worth more than half a star.

The trio in masks stood steadfast, their eyes still as cold as before.

Two Collisions escorted three full-skeleton transport vessels to the docking station. 30 Sang tribe members came out of the vessel. These were the people Ye Chong sent to Archipelago earlier. They brought with them plenty of mildstones, necessary for the Collisions. Mildstones could be used for a long time, but they were a one-time energy source, unlike the rechargeable energy cells. While the mildstones they had now were not exhausted yet, it was never too early to prepare for the eventuality.

The leading villager reported to Ye Chong, "Village Head asked to relay to you, sir, to not worry about the village. The steelbats showed no signs of returning. The village is doing well. Three goods transport vessels were built, and we've brought them all here. We brought 30 thousand mildstones, a thousand Collision parts of all sorts, and some lavagold pieces."

"I see, good job, please have some rest."

"Yes sir!" The 30 men answered respectfully and left.

The 30 thousand mildstones were quickly dispersed amongst the battalion members. The Collision mech parts and lavagold pieces were stored in the underground depository. The fact that all those lavagold could be sold for alot brought a faint smile to Ye Chong's grim face.

Just then, the comms device beeped. Old Chief Guo came on the holographic screen.

In the end, Ye Chong accepted the request to escort three clients safely to planet of Ling Yuan. The sky high remuneration offered had made Ye Chong, desperate for money, accept the job without thinking too much.

10 million credits! That was enough to buy basic equipment for a thousand Collisions! Ye Chong even considered capturing the three clients and see if he could make them offer more! Of course, that was only an impulsive thought. He was still reasonable. If they offered such a large reward, they must come from some influential background. This was not the time to make enemies with a powerful organization, unless he wanted to return to Archipelago straight away.

A thousand mechs escorted the small starship. The three clients were in this starship, and Old Chief Guo, as leader of Papatte, naturally accompanied them. Ye Chong was on the ship as well, while Sang Tie was left in charge of the 1,000 Collision mechs outside. Sang Pu was left at their base in case of emergencies.

Aside from the 20 piloting crew members on the starship, everyone else was a member of the Papatte Mech Squad. All of them wore silver masks, except for Old Chief Guo.

Mi Qi and the rest felt that they had made the right choice. The Papatte Mech Squad was quite something!

With their aristocratic upbringing, Mi Qi and Mi Su were more sensitive to these matters. The Papatte Mech Squad had surprised them with its competence. It even occurred to them briefly that the Papatte Mech Squad could be a trap set by the Three Aristocratic Families.

The strict discipline and obedience demonstrated by its squad members were similar to that of experienced soldiers. They also noticed that the Papatte Mech Squad's members did not lower their guard at any time of day. Even when off duty, they walked with a militaristic gait.

As the Mi family's eldest son, Mi Qi had seen the family's secret troops. However, they were superior only in terms of their equipment, and would not stand a chance against the Papatte Mech Squad. While he had never seen the squad's members fight, he could tell from their behavior and movements that they were all veteran combat experts. This was collaborated by Uncle Yun's judgment. When Uncle Yun spoke of the squad members, his face twitched nervously. The fact that even the calm Uncle Yun would be so perturbed was disquieting to Mi Qi and Mi Su.

They never saw the 1,000 mechs escorting them, so naturally, they could not tell the quality of those mech pilots. However, just the 100 combat experts in the ship were formidable enough. Even the Douglas Mech Squad, with its numerous elite members, did not have so many skilled combat experts.

Just how could someone produce such an elite squad? The three of them wondered nervously.

However, in sharp contrast to the Papatte Mech Squad's competence, their equipment was horrible. They were less than junk! Mi Qi remembered when he first saw a thousand rainbow-colored mechs, his first thought was, "Are they getting homeless people to make up the numbers?"

"What a pity!" Mi Qi had sighed then. He felt a deep sense of

humiliation. It was like seeing a group of Jie experts wearing only loincloths, while remembering that the so-called elites at home were dressed in the best tapestries. It was not a good feeling.

Mi Su spoke mildly, "It's hard to say, these mechs ... Er ... Maybe they can fly!" She was unsure as well, but her kind nature demanded her to defend the squad members. "Maybe they're a kind of secret weapon!" Seeing Mi Qi's unconvinced face, however, she quickly quieted down. The truth was, she did not quite believe it herself too.

Uncle Yun commented unexpectedly in his musing. "Young Miss here might be right. Perhaps it's a kind of secret weapon. The color patches might just be a cover."

Mi Qi curled his lips. "Perhaps." His fine features expressed his disbelief.

Just then, Old Chief Guo brought a masked man with him and approached them. Smiling, he said, "Having a good time? Or is something amiss on our part?"

Mi Qi quickly replied, "Your service is excellent, we are very grateful." For safety reasons, they had all adopted fake names - Fan Qi, Fan Su and Fan Yun. Ye Chong and Old Chief Guo did not suspect a thing. As someone introduced by Fan Qing, it was only natural that they were from the Fan family.

The three of them turned their attention to the masked men beside Old Chief Guo. The masked man was tall and slender, standing out amongst the rest of the squad members, who were mostly short. They noticed during their flight that the other squad members seemed very respectful towards this masked man. The three of them were sharp, and could see that the respect was sincere. Even Squad Captain Guo would treat him with respect.

However, with his slender looks, he did not look like a combat expert. This appealed to them more. If a person who could not fight was treated with respect by so many combat experts, he must

be capable in his own ways.

Ye Chong had learned long ago how to fake the appearance of an average person. He was not too shabby either, considering he had fooled even Uncle Yun. The Sang family villagers lacked this skill, their strengths entirely exposed like an unsheathed blade. It had never even occurred to them that they should keep their real potential hidden.

"Who's this?" Mi Qi asked, as the three of them looked to the masked man beside Old Chief Guo.

"This is our squad's tactician, Yang Ming," Old Chief Guo made that up on the spot. While he only just knew the man, he knew his character quite well. The boss would never be offended by this, and might even thank him for saving him the trouble of coming up with a fake name.

As expected, Ye Chong showed no annoyance, but merely nodded in greeting to the three clients.

The three of them were instantly impressed. It seemed that Papatte Mech Squad's admirable performance originated from this man. No wonder he was well respected despite his weak physique.

Mi Qi's first thought was to hire the man. Just what improvements would he bring to the Mi family's combat capacity? The thought appealed to him, but he was not foolish enough to bring it up before the squad captain.

Mi Su studied the man with slender masked man before her. The mask covered his face entirely, but she could sense something strange from his eyes. It was an overwhelming sense of apathy, as though nothing in the world could touch his heart.

She immediately imagined a most handsome young man with a calm appearance. However, the face was a blur, like it was shrouded by a mist.

Huh? For a moment, she felt the man's eyes studying her. It felt

like an almost undetectable jolt. Her mind was curious, but her cheeks were already blushing.

Just what would she do if she knew what Ye Chong was thinking now?

"Another beauty! If Shang is here, he must be pretty excited!" Ye Chong suddenly thought of the playboy, Shang.

She stole a look at him, and her heart jolted again almost imperceptibly. The calm eyes suddenly showed a rich mix of emotions. She could see his reminiscences through his eyes.

"Beautiful ladies ... " Ye Chong thought of the many times Shang tried to teach him about beauties without relent. The lips behind the mask arched slightly. He was swept by a whirlwind of memories, and one particular lady in white training garb appeared as quickly as she vanished again.

Chapter 293: Kyaji's Death I

Feng Su flew swiftly across the skies in her Wings of Nirvana. She had just received orders from the Elder to return to the He Yue galaxy. The truth was, she felt a little surreal receiving the order, but with the Elder himself on the holographic screen, there was no room for doubt.

She accepted her orders and left immediately. Since she was in Csebesini galaxy finishing off her last assignment, she would have to pass by the Orbits during her journey to He Yue galaxy. Csebesini galaxy was too far from the Orbits. It would take at least a month for her to reach He Yue galaxy at this rate.

To avoid unnecessary incidents, Wings of Nirvana did not fly too fast. Feng Su even took her time admiring the view below. Suddenly, she gasped in surprise as Wings of Nirvana stopped in its tracks in the sky.

A mech was making difficult double-sided turns just below Wings of Nirvana. It was simply too shocking that such challenging footwork was executed so perfectly. Double-sided turns was notoriously difficult not due to the piloting skills required, but the physical strength and endurance that the pilot must have to execute it. Even an above average physique would not be able to withstand the stress from this move.

Besides, due to her extended period of time spent in the Five Galaxies, Feng Su knew that the local mech pilots were all desperately lacking in terms of their physical training. Now that she found such a strong mech pilot, she was naturally surprised.

The mech did not stop there. Slithering steps, short-ranged quick turns ... The mech performed all these difficult moves one by one. Feng Su was beyond shocked. She was certain that even the average He Yue galaxy mech pilot could not achieve this.

Just what kind of monster was piloting the mech? Feng Su was

unavoidably interested in the mech pilot who demonstrated such power.

Inside the pilot cabin, Rui Bing was drenched in sweat, her white training garb completely soaked. These combat moves were challenging for her. It was her first time combining a few of these difficult moves together. Surprisingly, the stress on her body was compounded in an exponential way. Even a Jie expert like her was feeling a little overwhelmed.

Ever since she got separated from Ye Chong last time, she had been training desperately in mech piloting. Surprisingly, the one who helped her the most was Wei Yuan. With the holographic recording of Ye Chong's training, and his talented mind, he had identified the key ideas in Ye Chong's training.

Rui Bing was the first to benefit from Wei Yuan's analysis. Wei Yuan's body could not endure the harsh training, but Rui Bing was not so limited. Hence, Rui Bing improved by leaps and bounds, but Wei Yuan continued to stay where he was, causing him much frustration.

"Brother-in-law is crazy, so it's natural that sister is also crazy!" Wei Yuan often muttered to himself, and Rui Bing always awarded him with a flick on the back of his head from out of nowhere.

Rui Bing's daily practice was worrying everyone around her. To them, Rui Bing was always a delicate little girl, completely ignoring the fact that she was a Jie expert. In truth, a Jie expert's body was strong, suitable for Ye Chong's style of training.

On the other hand, Rui Bing did not expect that by spending more time on mech piloting and less on combat practice, her combat skills had improved a significant bit. It was a pleasant surprise. As a Jie expert, any improvements would come slowly, in a timescale of decades.

As she slipped out of her mech, a breeze greeted her, cooling her off in her wet training garb.

A metal feather silently swept towards her. The combined movements had left Rui Bing fatigued and slower. It was only when the feather approached closer that she heard the sharp whistle in the air. She knew something was wrong and was about to react, but her body slowed her down. She felt a numbing hit on her back before she lost consciousness.

Wings of Nirvana slowly descended. Feng Su slipped out of the pilot cabin, her beautiful face now framing a mischievous smile. She had wanted to see who was in the mech, nothing more. However, when she realized that the mech's movements were not only difficult moves, but combat moves craftily combined together, she felt a chill.

Combat move combinations were not achieved by just performing a few difficult moves in succession, but a matter of joining them together in a reasonable and crafty way.

It was when she saw a beautiful woman coming out of the mech that she decided to kidnap her. The Sanctuary was not in the habit of wasting such a world class talent. Besides, the mech pilot was a woman, which impressed her even more. After all, a woman's body was naturally weaker than a man's. Few women could perform those difficult combat moves. Even she herself could not have done it better.

Usually, she would have done this the long and indirect way, and not such an extreme way. However, since she was urgently returning to the He Yue galaxy, there was no time to get acquainted with the woman and win her trust. She had to resort to this distasteful method. The feathers on Winds of Nirvana could all be shot out for attacking. Of course, there were many other ways to use the feathers.

With just a light impact, Rui Bing was hit unconscious. Feng Su had used He Yue's special technique. By hitting specific parts of the human body, some interesting results could be derived.

For example, the point where the feather hit Rui Bing would make a person fall into a deep sleep, conducive for physical recovery. Feng Su did not want to harm the female mech pilot, after all. As a trump card, her skill level was apparent from this attack. The attack required extreme precision in position and strength, and achieving it at such a long distance was incredible.

Feng Su carried Bing Su into Wings of Nirvana and took off.

Mi Qi and Uncle Yun were vexed. Mi Su seemed to have developed a deep interest in the Papatte Mech Squad. Every day, she would stick around Squad Captain Guo, asking questions. Mi Qi and Uncle Yun were nervous. One really shouldn't ask about another's background so openly. Mi Qi had seen Squad Captain Guo looking uncomfortable more than once. His elder sister rarely took interest in family matters, so her current enthusiasm had surprised Mi Qi and Uncle Yun.

Squad Captain Guo answered awkwardly, while the tactician Yang Ming kept his silence. This further convinced them that the Papatte Mech Squad was more than what appeared on the surface.

Mi Qi thought the small starship's facilities were simple and crude, which told him that the Papatte Mech Squad was not doing well financially. Word was the starship was actually hired. He could not understand how a capable mech squad like this could be poor.

However, their situation had given Mi Qi his chance. The Mi family might not be outstanding, but their financial status could best all the Three Aristocratic Families.

He probed a few times before, and Squad Captain Guo's interest was apparent every time through his expression, but he had always chose his words carefully, stealing a glance at Yang Ming time and again. It seemed that Papatte Mech Squad's tactician was quite influential in the squad. Mi Qi also felt deeper respect towards the

squad captain, to be able to act so carefully despite the offers he promised.

That was not exactly the case, however. If Squad Captain Guo was the real leader of the squad, he would have instantly submitted to the Mi family. However, now that he was only leader in name, he dared not speak carelessly no matter what Mi Qi was offering him. The truth was, he was actually quite impressed by the Boss. Despite their financial dilemma, the Boss had remained calm as always before Mi Qi. Truly, Boss was The Boss!

In the rear of the starship, there was a tightly guarded area. 20 people were assigned here, and Mi Qi was politely asked to leave whenever he came by. Once, he tried to test them, taking just a single step further than allowed. Just a single step. In that instant, all 20 pair of eyes behind the silver masks were fixed on him with a deadly glare. He felt a chilling sensation along his spine, and did not take another step forward.

Knowing his fault, he gave an awkward smile and slipped away. However, he was curious - just what were they guarding?

"Once we leave this planet, we'll reach the planet Lunaris. I heard it's a little chaotic there." Mi Qi said solemnly. The Mi family's intel was rarely wrong.

Just then, an alarm blared. Old Chief Guo quickly switched on the holographic screen. A silver mask reported in a muffled voice, "Large swarm of mechs spotted ahead, identity unknown." It was Sang Tie.

Ye Chong nodded. "All members on high alert."

"Yes sir," Sang Tie replied.

Tension rose in the starship. Mi Qi was pale. It was his first time dealing with a situation like this. Uncle Yun was also looking grim. Only Mi Su's expression was unreadable.

They looked around, and noticed that the Papatte Mech Squad's

members all looked at ease, showing no fear. Mi Qi soon relaxed under their influence.

Through the starship's holographic screen, they could finally see the swarm of mechs clearly. Mi Qi breathed in deeply, his calmness shattered. Uncle Yun recognized the leading crimson mech. "Kyaji!"

This was a bright crimson humanoid mech. One could almost taste the smell of blood coming from it. Its left arm wielded a thick and menacing gun, while its right arm was equipped with a crescent hook, reflecting a chilling glare that scared even Uncle Yun. The mech named Kyaji was famous, but its reputation was won through spilling blood. No one knew what the mech pilot looked like. They only knew the name of the mech - Kyaji.

According to the stories, Kyaji never left survivors.

Uncle Yun's words made Old Chief Guo, Mi Qi and Mi Su all pale instantly.

Ye Chong tilted his head, looking at Old Chief Guo. Old Chief Guo gulped and answered with difficulty, "Kyaji is a pirate mech, the leader of the Death Legion."

"Pirates, I see." Ye Chong thought calmly about how queer his relationship was with pirates in general when he turned on the comms device. Sang Tie appeared on the holographic screen behind his silver mask. Ye Chong explained plainly, "They are enemies. Initiate attack. You're in command. Careful to avoid long range attacks."

"Yes sir!"

The three Mi family members stared at Ye Chong. Was the guy crazy, to initiate an attack on the Death Legion itself? The mechs on the holographic screen numbered at least 2000.

The Death Legion was mostly made up of solo pirates, gathering under the name of Kyaji. While the crew had a name, it was not a

structured organization. Nonetheless, every one of them was seasoned and capable. With Kyaji's personal reputation, the pirate crew was never once defeated. Besides, they were a sly bunch, making their way around outer space elusively, making them difficult to target at.

The dense formation made up of the 1000 mechs around the starship suddenly spread out, divided into many small squads and flew towards the enemy.

Mi Qi and his family watched the holographic screen anxiously. However, the holographic screen showed only the enemy's mech, and none of their own.

Could they really be a bunch of homeless people? Had they all run away?

There were five in a squad. They utilized evasive techniques while covering each other, confusing the enemy. Ye Chong's warning to be careful of long range weapons was relayed by Sang Tie to everyone else.

Sir's words were the law. None of the Sang tribe members would dare to be careless. They used every evasive technique they learned from Ye Chong. Looking at their situation, Sang Tie could not help but be reminded of the days when thousands of villagers practiced flying Collision at the Sang Family Village. It was a magnificent sight!

Chapter 294: Kyaji's Death II

The Collision mechs traced graceful archs in the sky with their evasive techniques. Since the mechs lacked long range weapons, Ye Chong had to teach them extensive evasion techniques. It was compulsory training for all Sang family villagers. Their strong bodies allowed them to execute harder evasive moves. A simple turn, when done in three-fourths the time, would double the strain on the body, but its effectiveness in evading attacks could be quadrupled.

Ye Chong had forgotten an important fact. If the enemy did not use their optical scanning systems, they would not be able to detect the Collision mechs, since they were made entirely of skeletons.

The pirates could only see a small and solitary starship.

Sang Tie quickly noticed the enemy's lack of reaction to them, and figured out why. He still remembered the holographic scanning systems installed in their own mechs, and was surprised to find that the Collisions mechs were undetectable with those scans.

As commander, Sang Tie knew exactly what to do.

Sang Tie relayed new orders for the squad - full speed ahead. All Collisions immediately dived towards the enemy. If anyone were using optical scanning systems, they would see the distressing sight of a thousand strangely built flying vessels flying towards the pirates like a barrier closing in.

Sang Tie did a quick estimation of the distance between them and the pirates.

All Collisions opened up two compartments on their sides.

Sang Tie commanded - drop the bombs!

2000 skeleton-made bombs were launched towards the pirates. Sang Tie only ordered a single wave of bombing. This was not their

village, and they were unable to replenish their weapons.

The vicious pirates only saw the lonely starship from afar, like a poor lamb waiting to be eaten, completely oblivious of the incoming attack.

The ensuing spectacle was indescribably grand.

On the holographic screen of the starship, they saw a bright eruption of light from an explosion, as Mi Qi and the rest had to shut their eyes. What a mysterious and terrible explosion! The Mi family trio stared in stupefaction. They could not understand how the pirate crew exploded so suddenly and violently.

The pirates were similarly dumbfounded and shocked when the explosion happened.

After the round of skeleton bombs, the Collision mechs spread out from their barrier formation into 200 squads of five, and launched themselves straight towards the pirate mechs.

"D*mbasses, use your optical scans!" A distinctive voice roared through the comms, cutting through all the noise of confusion. Abruptly, the comms channel quietened down instantly. Everyone heard their leader's voice.

"Spread out, spread out if you f*cking wanna live!" The thunderous voice roared again.

The pirates quickly gathered themselves and activated their optical scanning systems as they pulled out into a spread out formation.

Inside Kyaji, a man with a cold expression had a hopeless look in his eyes. He knew that the time had come. The other pirates might not realize it, but he had. Knowing that death was imminent, he felt unusually calm, devoid of any fear. He should have died a long time ago, and now, he finally would.

Kyaji's holographic scanning system was top of the line. He had bought it at a high price, a product of the Xue Lai tribe. Even the

Three Aristocratic Families could not hide their mechs so completely from this scanning system. These mechs, however, were entirely hidden from the scans. He was shocked beyond words.

He put his hands gently on the controls. He no longer felt dispirited, but excited, and even eager.

Even if death was unavoidable, he would not give up without a fight!

He tore off his clothes, baring his upper body, and roared at the skies!

An energy beam barely grazed past Sang Tie's mech. Sang Tie was surprised. This was his first time nearly being hit by an energy beam. His eyes traced the source of the beam, arriving at a bright, crimson mech.

Energy beams of various colours were shot across the sky as the battle went on. Fortunately, only a few of them hit the Collisions, and those that were hit were not fatally damaged. Besides, the Collision was tougher than Ye Chong expected.

Kyaji's pilot almost had a stroke, his confidence struck down once again. He could not aim at the mechs. They were moving too fast. He had always prided on his shooting skills, but even he could not shoot down any of them. It was like a personal humiliation.

The sniper pilots amongst the pirates shared his sentiment. The enemy mechs did not seem to perform any special evasive techniques, but for some reason, they just could not aim on the mechs. It was like their aiming system was off.

Strange ... Just what was really happening? The sniper mech pilots were flabbergasted and aggrieved.

However, Sang Tie and his battalion did not pity the pirates. They flew gracefully with their evasive techniques and flew straight into the mechs of the confused pirates.

Collision mechs were so impossibly fast that the pirates could barely believe it, especially the sniper mech pilots. They had failed to aim at the enemy mechs, and now they saw that the mechs were faster than they had anticipated. They stood no chance at all.

Sang Tie's mech took a slight turn and went straight for the crimson mech. The other mech seemed to realize his intentions, and waved off the other pirates surrounding it.

He wanted a one-on-one battle!

Sang Tie quickly deduced the enemy's message.

A one-on-one battle was common in the battlefield. Capable mech pilots would usually accept the challenge, since it was a show of confidence towards themselves. If they could not even trust their own abilities, they would never become strong. This theory was widespread in He Yue galaxy, with quite a few prominent mech pilots agreeing to the idea. Hence, individual heroism became a popular notion.

In fact, one-on-one battles were common in the Sang Family Village as well. The challenged party would rarely back down.

Kyaji's pilot smiled wickedly, seeing red. F*ck, he will not die without taking one out with him! He was sure that the enemy would not back down. His legacy will be a self-sacrificing end!

Sang Tie's expression was cold as ever under his silver mask, completely different from his usual fiery temper. He ignored the enemy's challenge, and led his troops in a straight line towards the enemy.

Through the optical scanning system, Collision's speed was shocking to see. The pirates watched anxiously with their hearts racing.

Sang Tie's mech flew straight towards Kyaji, followed by the other four mechs in his squad. Kyaji also flew swiftly towards Sang Tie. The pilot inside had his eyes wide open, panting heavily, but

his hands were nimbly dancing on the controls, waiting for the moment of impact to deliver a fatal blow to the enemy.

They were getting closer and closer. The pirates around them stared, unwilling to miss the final moment. The Sang tribe members, however, completely ignored the fight and continued destroying their enemies.

Closer, closer now! Everyone held their breath as they watched the two mechs closing in on each other!

It ended in a blur. The anticipated collision did not occur. The crescent blade did not touch its target. This was completely beyond his expectation.

Impossible!

Stab! He felt a crushing pain as a sharp object plunged through his body. He never found out how he died.

Sang Tie's Collision had suddenly swerved off course just when the pirates thought he would crash into Kyaji. Instead, it graced past Kyaji's side in a blur. The mech behind Sang Tie delivered the fatal blow to Kyaji, thrusting its skeleton spear into the crimson mech. The other three mechs flew past Kyaji from its sides, tearing the mech into fragments with their skeleton fins.

On the starship's holographic screen, a hole suddenly appeared in Kyaji's body, and the mech quickly exploded into hundreds of fragments. No one saw the attacker. They only saw a pirate mech suddenly destroyed, or being stabbed through with something. Since the space pirates were far from the starship, an optical scan would not produce clear results. Hence, Ye Chong had used the holographic scanning system, which could not detect the Collisions.

This eerie scene was mind bending. Mi Qi and his family felt chilled to the bone.

Sang Tie smiled coldly behind his silver mask as he looked back

at Kyaji, now a useless cloud of debris. He could not understand the idea of fighting one-on-one. After all, this was war, not some play-fighting to pass the time. To him, fighting one-on-one in these life-or-death situations was ridiculous. The Sang tribe members had lived in an environment that shaped their idea of real battles. Before they had Collisions, it was impossible for any one villager to fight against a wild beast. They had long learned to work together in hunting.

Sang Tie looked at Kyaji's remains the way he would look at his prey in Archipelago.

Chapter 295: Everything's Worth Something

Death Legion was annihilated silently. Despite Kyaji's menacing reputation, it still ended up destroyed, without even a body to show for it. Ye Chong had no interest in Kyaji or its pilot, of course. He just wanted to make sure that the guy was dead.

Since he had made his move, there must be no loose ends. This was always Ye Chong's way of doing things. He absolutely would not believe that any person could survive an attack like that.

On the starship, Mi Qi and family were white as a sheet. The Death Legion was an infamous organization in the He Yue galaxy, and now it was annihilated in just minutes. No one would believe what they had seen. Death Legion pirates had been around for years, making enemies wherever they went, but still they lived ever so easily, powerful as they were.

However, the formidable Death Legion was now being casually erased from living history, under the hands of the mech squad they hired.

Mi Qi and the family felt goosebumps all over, and a chill running up their spine.

Anti-detection mechs!

That was their first thought.

Anti-detection mechs were not a new idea. Back in the days, the Three Aristocratic Families were infamous for their anti-detection technology. They had relied on anti-detection mechs to spread their power, rising to the forefront of technology in the He Yue galaxy.

However, as technology improved, holographic scanning systems became more and more advanced. Early anti-detection mechs could now be easily scanned through normal holographic scanning systems. On the other hand, anti-detection technology had reached

a bottleneck and stagnated, a problem that was shared by all the Three Aristocratic Families. All these years, none of the aristocratic families have had any breakthrough.

To many, anti-detection mechs were slowly becoming a relic.

Now, however, Mi Qi and his family had just witnessed true anti-detection technology at work!

The multicolored mechs suddenly became an object of mystery to them. It was like seeing an old, scraggly beggar suddenly killing a Jie expert without breaking a sweat. The contrast was too strong for them to accept.

What was happening to the world?

The mysterious Papatte Mech Squad was now increasingly mystical to them. Such a powerful mech squad had deployed so many elites just for 10 million credits. Mi Qi suddenly felt that he had a stroke of luck.

Old Chief Guo was also feeling a little dazed. He had seen them fight before, and it was bloody, but this time was completely different. This was weird! This was scarily weird! Anyone who saw what happened on the holographic screen would be shocked, Old Chief Guo was sure of it. To him, what happened could be shot into a movie worthy of an award, even if he knew that he was no movie director.

In fact, right after Ye Chong issued his orders, he was soon aware of this anti-detection issue. However, he soon frowned again, not because there was a problem with Sang Tie's commands, but because Ye Chong had thought of another problem.

Full-skeleton mechs were entirely suited for stealthy attacks, but this unique feature also made them too eye-catching. Hence, they were not suitable for normal transportation. It looked that he needed to make some normal mechs for the Sang tribe members for normal use.

"Sigh, more spending!" Ye Chong sighed to himself. Just how much was 5000 mechs worth? Ye Chong's heart ached.

Sang Tie's face appeared on the holographic screen. "Squad Captain, the enemy is destroyed. We have 23 injured and 11 dead." Sang Tie reported solemnly to Old Chief Guo. With outsiders around, they treated Old Chief Guo as the leader, when in fact, they were always reporting to Ye Chong.

Old Chief Guo shuddered inside as he recalled the way they killed emotionlessly, but he braced himself and said, "Alright, get some rest."

Ye Chong was a little surprised. Despite their advantage, they still lost so many. The pirates were indeed as powerful as rumored. He had watched the entire battle, and saw how the desperate pirates fought like a cornered animal - dangerous and vicious. If Sang Tie's commands were less effective, they would have lost more people.

It was Sang Fan who consoled him from the side, "Don't mind it too much, sir. Loss is inevitable in war." Back at the Sang Family Village, this level of loss was all too common. Before they had proper weapons, their hunting troops would often leave and never return. This was one of the main reasons the village size quickly shrank to its current form.

Mi Qi also commended, "Your squad is excellent, defeating even the infamous Death Legion so easily, it's truly amazing." Uncle Yun and Mi Su agreed, with Mi Su stealing glances at Ye Chong time and again.

Ye Chong took a glance at them and said flatly, "You're too kind! However, please keep our squad's little trick a secret." Ye Chong was straightforward.

Mi Qi and Uncle Yun exchanged looks. They could clearly feel the threat coming from the tactician called Yang Ming, fleeting as it was. Uncle Yun took a step forward and said with a serious

expression, "Please rest assured, we who know the power of words will always speak mindfully."

Mi Qi quickly added, "That's right, we'll never reveal anything about your mech squad." What a joke, Papatte Mech Squad was far stronger than they had anticipated. To think they were rated as half a star! They would never believe it now. The Mi family had always been inferior in terms of military prowess, and cannot afford to make enemies with such a powerful army. Besides, since Papatte Mech Squad was in need of funds, it was an opportunity for them to forge a good relationship.

Mi Qi and Uncle Yun had already given up on recruiting the tactician. They knew that the squad was too powerful for the Mi family to handle.

Mi Su's expression was unreadable. She lifted her head to look at Ye Chong for second, and quickly bowed down again silently.

Up next was the cleanup. This was the most exciting part of the Sang tribe members. Mi Qi and his family watched in disbelief as the Papatte Mech Squad's members did their thing.

Mech fragments, scraps and parts were all hauled into the starship. They could hear a thunderous voice yelling occasionally, "Look carefully, open your eyes wide, don't miss a thing. Sir has said to find the dimension keystone for every mech, it's good stuff!"

Mi Qi gulped heavily. Just was were the pirates now?

Uncle Yun sighed inside. Poverty could bend the strongest warriors. These excellent mech pilots had been forced to do something like this due to their extreme lack of money. When he gets back, he must lecture those blissfully ignorant mech pilots of the Mi family.

Mi Su covered her little mouth with her hands, watching the growing pile of trash on the starship, muttering, "How pitiful!"

Unlike Mi Qi, Uncle Yun and Mi Su, every Sang tribe member was all smiles. Old Chief Guo was embarrassed to death. He noticed the Mi family's reaction and felt even more embarrassed!

Ye Chong looked at the pilin mountain of trash, his eyes gleaming with excitement. It reminded him of his time on the trash planet. Rummaging through the trash for nuggets was routine, and a job he was very familiar with.

He thought of old Winnie, and his excitement when he found Mu and Shang ...

That was how Mi Qi and his family saw something quite odd. Papatte Mech Squad's tactician came every day to the trash pile, surrounded by a few people who listened as he taught them about all the mech parts he found. The tactician had also disassembled the parts using the tools onboard the starship.

Dimension keystones, holographic scanning systems, communications systems ...

As they watched him explain each mech part with ease, they could not help but wonder if the tactician had actually worked as a trash handler before.

Ye Chong had never minded the way others looked at him. For now, he was actually quite excited. The pirates' mechs had wonderful equipment, a pleasant surprise for him.

He did not know, of course, that the Death Legion pirates were all battle veterans. While they did not exactly splurge, they were still willing to spend good money on equipment that could keep them alive.

The most interesting parts came from the mech, Kyaji. While they were only fragments now, Ye Chong could still see that the mech was well made. His eyes gleamed as he found its equipment, like the relatively intact Wintervision-III scanning system. This was a high class product from the Xue Lai clan, rarely found in the

market. Ye Chong did not recall seeing it sold at the mech parts store in Foundation city last time.

However, its performance was the best that Ye Chong had ever seen. Ye Chong installed the holographic scanning system model in Sang Tie's mech, which made everyone else very, very jealous. It was a long time before they stopped hearing Sang Tie's foolish giggling behind his mask in the starship.

It was too bad that the Collisions attacked with too much force. Not many mech parts were salvageable. However, dimension keystones were hard to break, so most of their loot were actually the keystones. Even so, out of the 2000 pirate mechs, they only found slightly more than a thousand dimension keystones. They came in a large variety of models, and it took Ye Chong quite some effort to set them up.

These 1000 dimension keystones were an unexpected haul. "Hmm, robbing is actually more efficient," Ye Chong mused to himself.

Chapter 296: Unmanned Black Market

However, Ye Chong still had his senses with him. The crazy idea came and went.

If he had enough tools, Ye Chong could disassemble all the trash material and make full use of them. Now, he could only throw the worthless material out of the spaceship.

The rest of the journey was relatively peaceful, without further incident. The thousand-strong Collision escort around their starship were like ghosts, undetected by any of the other starships that they encountered. It was apparent how heavily the people these days had come to rely on holographic scanning systems.

In another corner of the He Yue galaxy, a middle-aged man gasped, "Kyaji was killed?"

"Yes. The Death Legion was annihilated, there were no survivors." On his holographic screen, an average looking man reported in a low voice.

The middle-aged man asked, "Do you know who's responsible?"

The other person hesitated for a while before replying, "Should be the Papatte Mech Squad. We've looked into them. They should only be a half-star mech squad. About a month ago, they helped the Fan family to find three ripple orchids plants. They are currently escorting the Mi family's Mi Qi and Mi Su." The spy replied.

"Half a star?" The middle-aged man frowned, and said, "The Fan family and Mi family share a good relationship, it's only natural that they share their contacts. How strong is this Papatte Mech Squad?"

"Unknown as of yet," the spy explained, "None of us has seen them in battle before. However, the only ones at the battlefield were the Death Legion and Papatte Mech Squad's starship.

According to our spies nearby, after the Death Legion entered the field, they never came out again. Our people also found a lot of mech remains in that area, confirmed to be from the Death Legion. Besides, we found Kyaji's remains. That is how we deduce the annihilation of the Death Legion."

The middle-aged man quickly understood him. "You said they only have one starship? Is it large or mid sized?"

"Small sized," the spy replied.

"Impossible," the middle-aged man shook his head. "Small sized starships have limited passenger capacity, not enough to destroy the Death Legion entirely. The Death Legion has 2,541 members in total." He was confident of his memory.

"I am also confused by this," the spy admitted.

The middle-aged man asked grimly, "Where are they headed?"

"Lunaris."

"Alright, keep watch on them. If they really destroyed the Death Legion, then they're a force to be reckoned with. But stay out of their sight." The middle-aged man ordered after a moment's thought.

"Yes sir."

On Lunaris, a squad of a thousand members moved quickly. This was a deserted place, with only a few mechs occasionally flying across the skies. With dimension keystones, the group's mobility and covertness were vastly improved. Even so, Ye Chong dared not bring too many people into the city. The Sang tribe members seemed to be unable to hide their threatening demeanor. They all looked vicious and scary, like an unsheathed blade.

He knew exactly what would happen if he brought them all into the city. The squad set camp in a deserted valley. Ye Chong was not concerned about their safety - not many could pose a risk to them. Besides, who would bring a whole battalion marching into the

deserted lands out here?

Ye Chong took only a hundred people with him. Their destination was Guilar city. According to Mi Qi, no one would dare to start an open war on Lunaris, since this place was the base of the Black Market. However, that did not mean that the place was well regulated. It was quite the contrary. The society was in a state of unrest, and small-scale battles occurred every other day. Without proper safety measures, one would be at risk being killed.

Guilar city had a 300-kilometer perimeter that was a no-fly zone for mechs. No-fly zones were common in He Yue galaxy, since mechs battles happened frequently, and tend to destroy everything around them. Hence, every city would have its own no-fly zone. Any mech flying in a no-fly zone would be ruled as an enemy of the city, with heavy consequences.

They were a hundred people, forming a standard combat squad. At the center were five people, each carrying a box. Ye Chong and the Mi family members led the way.

Hai Lian wore his mask, carried by Sang Tie as he looked around him with interest. These days, he guarded the boxes as ordered by Ye Chong and bored to death. Now that he was out in the open, he was naturally invigorated. He was already used to being carried by Sang Tie. He adjusted to a more comfortable position, but otherwise looked completely at ease.

Sang Ling carried Mi Su. Even Old Chief Guo was carried by a Sang tribe member. Only Mi Qi and Uncle Yun walked on their own.

The squad advanced quickly. Soon, Mi Qi grew pale from the exertion, panting as he sweated heavily. Uncle Yun fared better, looking his usual self, but his short breaths betrayed his stamina.

Uncle Yun was stunned. These people were strong. All this while, Uncle Yun was confident of his own abilities, but he had never been outmatched this much before.

It was shocking! Their pace was wearing him out, but these people showed no signs of fatigue. Those around him were breathing normally, as if they were at rest. What surprised him more was the man carrying another man, and that woman carrying the Young Miss. These two people were carrying someone, but seemed entirely unaffected. Even the tactician, Yang Ming, who seemed fragile at first, was keeping up with the group.

If the squad members were like unsheathed swords, then Yang Ming was a sword still hidden in its sheath, showing no signs of its true potential. Uncle Yun knew from experience that this kind of people were the ones to really watch out for.

He took a glance at the Young Master, and knew that he was not doing well. Moving quickly was actually quite strenuous, and while the Young Master was actually quite outstanding amongst his peers, he was still greatly outmatched by the squad members.

Since when did the He Yue galaxy come to have such a group of strong people?

Uncle Yun was about to give Mi Qi a helping hand when the young man suddenly stumbled. A hand reached for him, and Mi Qi lifted his head with difficulty to find Yang Ming on his side. He looked at Yang Ming with gratitude, and suddenly felt himself lifted and moving as quick as the clouds in the sky.

The group slowed down when they were near Guilar city. There were more people around them now. Hovercars breezed past them then and again. These were cars used for passenger transportation.

Hai Lian sidled up to Ye Chong and introduced, "Guilar city is the second largest black market in the He Yue galaxy. Actually, you can find black markets everywhere on Lunaris, but you'll find Guilar city's Unmanned Black Market the most famous one around. Of course, it's a complicated place, where every powerful organization in existence will have placed their own men here. You can find rare goods here often, that's why the organizations try to

keep an eye on things."

Mi Qi had already recovered himself, and said with a smile, "It looks like you're quite familiar with this place, my family also has people here. Once we enter the city, your contract will be fulfilled."

Uncle Yun was looking at the five boxes protected in the center. He could guess that these were the things that were guarded heavily on the starship.

After their long journey, all of them knew that the real leader here was actually the tactician.

The squad members all looked too sharp to be ignored. All the pedestrians stayed out of their way.

As they entered the city, they found many people on the streets. Unlike Foundation city, however, the people here were all highly vigilant, their wary behavior almost transparent from the way they acted. Sang Tie and the rest all noticed the atmosphere and raised their guard even further, their deathly aura now honed to a sharp point.

The people around them were all discreetly shocked. Mi Qi and his family all groaned inside. How could they be so inexperienced? D*mned if they got into trouble for being so obvious of their abilities! The Mi family members were all nervous, waiting for the first enemy to knock on their door.

Unexpectedly, no one came to mess with them, right until they reached the Mi family base. Now that they were in their own territory, Mi Qi and his family all heaved a sigh of relief. The base was notified before their departure earlier on, so the Mi family's people in the area had all gathered here to protect the Young Master and Young Miss.

With 10 million credits paid to them, Ye Chong and his squad finally relaxed a little.

After they parted ways, Ye Chong and his squad settled down in a

local hotel. After some rest, Ye Chong asked for Hai Lian and Old Chief Guo and asked them, "Are you familiar with the Unmanned Black Market?"

"I am," Old Chief Guo replied quickly, "Been here with a friend before, but that was a long time ago."

Hai Lian shook his head. "I've not been here before. A poor man like me can't even afford a mech, much less anything you can buy here in the black market."

"Alright, you lead the way," Ye Chong said to Old Chief Guo. He turned to Sang Fan and said, "Bring 20 people, and bring the boxes with you. Sang Tie and the rest stay here."

"Yes sir," Sang Fan answered.

Hai Lian and Old Chief Guo exchanged looks of confusion. They did not know what was in the boxes that could be so important to the boss. Hai Lian had guarded the boxes throughout the journey, and even he did not know what they were.

"It's here," Old Chief Guo pointed towards a tall metallic building in front of them. The skyscraper pierced right through the clouds, its metallic walls shining under the sun's rays.

"What extravagance ... The entire building was made of metal ..." Everyone shared the same thought. Just the building itself would cost a fortune.

As they entered the building, they only found customers bustling into the market. There was no staff, just as the place's name promised.

Ye Chong noticed something interesting. Most of the customers wore masks, and some even wrapped themselves up all over. Ye Chong's group looked comparatively normal. Old Chief Guo and Hai Lian exchanged smiles over the observation.

Every level in the building was divided into hundreds of independent rooms. Old Chief Guo seemed to know his way. He

brought the group into a vacant room. The group found it to be larger than expected, with more than enough room to host more than 20 people.

Inside the room was a photon processor with an inlet beneath it.

Everyone studied the room curiously as Old Chief Guo explained, "This is a normal room, used to sell smaller items. Larger items like mechs will have to be processed on Levels 1 to 5."

"Put the box in this inlet, there's a conveyor belt that transfers the box inside. We just have to put our items inside, key in our account number in the photon processor, and we'll be done. This Unmanned Black Market has a good reputation. I've never heard of any cases of fraud or missing goods. They have their own professionals to appraise the goods. The goods will be categorized based on their value and put on the auction market. However, they will take 20 percent of the value as commission. If you don't require a professional's appraisal, then your items will be categorized as miscellaneous, but in this case, they'll only charge 10 percent commission."

Old Chief paused for a moment and continued, "The truth is, there are too many loopholes in this trading method, but their internal regulation is strict. After decades of revision, it has become the system that people come to trust today. Besides, the best thing about it is discretion. No one knows the owner of each item."

Ye Chong nodded in understanding. He put the boxes into the inlet and keyed in the identity number prepared earlier into the photon processor.

Soon, he was done. Old Chief Guo added, "Every room can only be used once every day. This room we're in will not be used again until tomorrow."

"Alright," Ye Chong said, "We'll leave now."

Old Chief Guo did not go to the door, but walked to a wall and pressed on a red button. The wall slid to the side.

"This is the exit." Ye Chong and his group went in, and Old Chief Guo pressed another button inside. "This is the transferrer. The building has more than 900 exit points, which can be as far as the far east of the city. The transferrer will bring us to a random exit point. It's for the clients' safety."

Ye Chong immediately felt the transferrer moving downwards. However, the transferrer moved steadily, and soon came to a stop.

"So it's really random," Ye Chong smiled wryly to himself as he looked at the unfamiliar surroundings around him.

Chapter 297: The Boy Called Tanimatsu

The crowd was dense. One could hear loud noise and laughter here and there. Ye Chong was uncomfortable with the place. Where was this place? He looked to Old Chief Guo, the only one with experience of the Unmanned Black Market. Old Chief Guo shrugged in ignorance. He looked to Hai Lian, and found the same helpless expression.

The Sang tribe members were also uneasy. They all looked wary, like anticipating an enemy.

Hai Lian was quicker in mind. He stopped a passerby and asked, "Hi there, may I know what this place is?"

The passerby looked at him and answered impatiently, "It's the Peddler Black Market, of course. Alright, let me go, I'm in a hurry."

Hai Lian thanked him profusely.

"Peddler Black Market?" Everyone looked confused.

"Let's have a look," said Ye Chong. He was intrigued by the large crowd found here. Since they were not in a hurry, they might as well explore the area.

If the Unmanned Black Market was a classy black market, then this was a small low class black market. Hai Lian had heard of it before, but this was his first time visiting the place.

"This is no black market! It's an open market!" Hai Lian felt incredulous.

The shops around them were all displaying a large volume of goods. Some shops even put their mechs right beside their store entrance. It was just too odd. All kinds of parts and items were spread out to entice their customers. It was a mess.

Ye Chong frowned. He could not understand how a dangerous and disordered place could have so many people gathering.

The streets were narrow, and the bustling crowd made it even more packed.

Just then, a young boy approached the group and asked in his childish voice, "Do you need a guide?"

Immediately, Ye Chong and his group looked to the young boy. The Sang tribe members were too intimidating, even in their gaze. The boy paled in shock.

Ye Chong studied the young boy. He was dressed in a neat light blue shirt. It was quite worn but still clean. The boy's large eyes looked sharp. While he looked pale, it was obvious that he was trying his best to not back down.

Ye Chong could not help but felt impressed. For a boy of around 11 or 12 years old to stand against the gaze of Sang Fan and the rest, it was an impressive feat.

Ye Chong nodded and said, "Hmm, that sounds like a good idea."

The boy's eyes brightened up in encouragement. He spoke confidently, "I've lived here all my life, I know every corner of the place. If you hire me, that'll be 20 credits a day."

Ye Chong studied the young boy intently, and the boy fidgeted nervously.

"Alright," Ye Chong nodded, and added, "If you don't do a good job, we'll fire you."

"No problemo!" The young boy was so happy he almost leapt in joy. His initial gloominess evaporated. However, he quickly dived right into his role and tried to affect a polite attitude. "Gentlemen, where you like to go now?"

"Let's explore this place for now," Ye Chong said. With him at the helm, no one else would contradict him.

"Alright!" The young boy led the way as he introduced, "This is the Peddler Black Market. Don't be fooled by all these low class

items you see here, it's an entirely different world further in. They usually trade in bulk here, err, meaning that they sell many many items together at once." The boy gesticulated as he explained.

A twelve-year-old boy trying to gesticulate like an adult was too cute for his audience. Even the Sang tribe members with their awkward social manners smiled warmly at the boy.

As a woman, Sang Ling was even more enraptured by the young boy. She went to his side and bent down to ask, "Little boy, what's your name?"

"I'm called Tanimatsu," the young boy answered loudly.

The group followed Tanimatsu and the child talked about the place. Ye Chong studied the goods in display in the stores. Indeed, they were all low class goods. However, there were also many odd items like rocks, skeletons and plants for sale; some were even unfamiliar for Ye Chong.

This hooked his interest.

Tanimatsu could see that Ye Chong was interested in the goods, and explained, "There are all kinds of stuff for sale here, most of them are not valuable, but yesterday some guy found a whatchamacallit rock here, heard it's worth a hundred thousand credits." Tanimatsu said this jealously.

Almost every shop would have a spot just for these miscellaneous items.

Ye Chong suddenly stopped in his tracks, looking at one of the shops by the street. His eyes widened, and he quickly approached the shop.

Ye Chong's sudden movement surprised the group, but they quickly adjusted and shifted formation, keeping Ye Chong protected in the center.

Ye Chong walked to the shop, where a good many items of all sorts were spread out for sale. The shopkeeper quickly arrived to

tend to him with a wide smile. He saw the big group approaching and knew that he might just strike gold with this customer.

"Hi, good sir, take a look around, lemme know if you're interested in anything. Everything is sold at a fair price here, no cheating our customers. We've been in business for decades, our reputation is rock solid," the shopkeeper went on and on.

Hai Lian looked at the wall, freshly painted, and twisted his lips in disdain as he muttered, "You call this a decades-old shop? Isn't this paint new?"

Ye Chong ignored the shopkeeper and walked towards the miscellaneous items. He saw a metallic palm reaching out from the pile of items, and carefully swept away the other items covering it. Soon, the entire metal item revealed itself.

It was a humanoid mech model, about 30 centimeters tall. The model seemed old, its surface dull from age, with a few rusted spots. Ye Chong studied the model quietly.

"Hehe, you've a good eye, sir. That's an antique, more than a few hundred years old, I didn't expect you to be a collector with such a sharp eye at your age, apologies for my rudeness sir!" The storekeeper flattered Ye Chong as he tried to recall the value that he bought the item for. It took some time, but he finally remembered that he bought it off an old man for only five credits.

It was obvious that his customer was not a local. Just as the shopkeeper was thinking about how to cheat him, the young boy with the group interrupted, "Sir, everything in the miscellaneous items pile is worth 50 credits. It's the same for every shop."

The shopkeeper glared at the young boy, who had effectively destroyed all hopes for his scheming. Tanimatsu did not back down, and glared back. Sang Ling humphed coldly behind Tanimatsu, her eyes staring at the shopkeeper threateningly until he shuddered.

What a scary bunch!

The shopkeeper laughed awkwardly and continued, "The boy's right, our price is fair, we don't cheat. The item's 50 credits, if you're interested, sir. Err, what else do you need, sir? We have all kinds of mech parts and equipments, all at a fair price. Look at your guards, I'm sure they're all experts. A good expert should be matched with a good weapon! If you see anything you're interested in, lemme know, price is negotiable, yes, if you buy in bulk I'll even give you a discount! It's a good buy, I'll tell you!" The storekeeper blabbered on. 50 credits was not a lot, but every credit counted.

"I see. I'll have this." Ye Chong picked up the model, and signalled for Old Chief Guo to pay.

"What a stingy group, spending only 50 credits," the shopkeeper thought to himself with disdain. He had expected more. Even so, he still said warmly, "Please come again!"

Ye Chong was in a better mood after they left the shop. Hai Lian and Old Chief Guo may not notice it, but the Sang tribe members did. Sang Fan asked despite himself, "Sir, what is that thing?"

"Something fine!" Ye Chong sounded happy, if only by a little. He then said, "We'll return now." He was no longer in the mood for exploring, thinking only to study the model closely once they were back at the hotel.

The Sang tribe members were not interested in exploring anyway, and had only followed Ye Chong's lead. Hai Lian and Old Chief Guo still felt like wandering around, but they dared not voice their opposition. Besides, they were also interested in the item that the boss had bought. Boss had always looked indifferent, and they had never seen him express such a strong interest in anything.

Anything that can provoke his interest like this must be something extraordinary.

Sang Ling told Tanimatsu the name of their hotel. Tanimatsu recognized it and immediately led the way.

The group followed Tanimatsu as they headed towards the hotel. Suddenly, there was a commotion ahead of them.

Chapter 298: A Balance of Everything

People flooded the road ahead, with constant cries and shriek of women.

Ye Chong, upon seeing the sight, frowned. The road was already narrow at the beginning, with half of it occupied by the stalls and stands. And now the little space remained was also occupied by passersby. What had happened inside? Ye Chong did not care, he just wanted to head back to the hotel as soon as possible, away from this ridiculous disaster.

Nevertheless, judging by the situation in front, it would be nearly impossible to squeeze their way out. "Is there any other path?" asked Ye Chong to Tanimatsu.

He turned his head over, "There are a few... but it would be a long detour."

Ye Chong pondered... "Follow me." And he leapt! Like an eagle soaring to the sky, he flung himself over the crowd. The remaining mates immediately understood his plan as they followed quickly. Sang Ling grabbed Tanimatsu, while Guo and Hai Lian had also joined the luggage transit.

A tip landed on one shoulder of the spectator, one more fling into the sky, advancing forward, like a group of frogs hopping over the lily pads.

"What the hell happened!? Did someone step on my shoulder?"

"Jesus Christ! You can't do that for f*ck's sake!"

"Manners of youngsters today!"

"Someone just wants to die today, HUH!"

...

Of course their behavior would be treated as a typical misconduct to be cursed upon. Those spectators were something to have a

living here, they were not the one to be bullied; they had seen snobbish behavior but not as shamelessly as this! The people were enraged as they chased after the jumping folks.

"Kek!" Chuckled Sang Ling, as she placed Tanimatsu under her armpit, whistled sharp.

The Sangs switched their positions in the air, "Make it quick." Ye Chong's order came softly but discernible among the disciplined Sangs.

"Yes sir!" The response came in a thunderous flock that the people flinched on the ground. The Sangs were in the air, but they were still capable to dish out something. Conquering peaks and flipping over valleys were the bread and butter of the Sangs back in Archipelago, especially when having a survival race with the beast stampede was their daily chore. Their feet could send them right into the sky, unlike those grounded folks.

Wham! Thup! Thump!

A land crash performed by the Sangs, as they whammed upon the people on the ground.

"The f*cking hell, don't fly your bloody self if you don't know how to!"

"I'm feeling insulted."

Well this move was certainly not okay for Ye Chong and his men. Everyone here knew at least one trick or two in combats. The men were obviously enraged by this blatant provocation. Their blood boiled hotter than the lava, although they had been stopped once after another by the Sangs flawlessly, more and more men joined the forces to hunt those damned fools on top.

It was a typical chase between the chaser and the chased.

Ye Chong and his men were in a blitz of switcheroo as their afterimages intersected repetitively while delivering the land crash like falling star occasionally on the chasers.

The Sangs looked excited upon seeing the chasers tripping themselves like a strike on bowling, Ye Chong was feeling troubled though. He never knew how this would launch such a fiasco in Guilar city, that it felt like a conformity effect, once a man started the chase, the rest followed obediently.

The masked men were extremely skillful in the eyes of these enraged men, they were shocked as they found these masked men striking great similarity with the 8 Jie experts involved in the saga of Foundation city... even though there were obviously more than 8 of them right ahead.

12...13...18...20...?

20? Twenty Jie experts? The figure felt unreal in the head. This would be interesting, thought one of them, as they decided to cause more havoc to test the skills of these masked individuals, to determine if they were the hidden Jie experts.

Dammit I just wanted to get back to my room! What is this fiasco about?

The situation grew more chaotic, as Ye Chong began realizing it would only go more off the tangent if nothing was done at his side. He had a team of well-trained troop with forces matching the Jie experts, but two iron fists still could be no match for hundred arms.

Ye Chong's arms vibrated, his muscles contracted and waved vigorously, Inhale...

HAH! A roar struck the place, which the people stumbled upon, knowing this cry meant nothing else than a metamorphosis, where a great martial arts practitioner hit a turning point of his strength and would undergo an pumped status, the cry was very much different than what they heard too... Was that...

HAH!!! Sang Fan and the remaining men screamed on top of their lungs as well. To the grounded men's disbelief, they seemed to

have seen the air particles vibrating, as waves surged through the place. Some of the angry men had already launched themselves but they fell clumsily as disrupted by the sudden roar. A handful of them remained in the air pouncing, their vitality warded them from being force-grounded, but one could see their faces paler than paper.

Jie experts. They are the Jie experts!

20 Jie experts screamed and this happened?!

Ye Chong made a tip on one of the Sangs, Zoom! He launched himself right to one of the mechs parked right outside of a mech store at the roadside. A showpiece.

The men retaining their velocity shifted their sight to Ye Chong, wondering what in the He Yue this masked man was doing.

Ye Chong made a flip and dexterously landed upon the shoulder of the mech.

"Wow!" Some of the few experts in the crowd were hurraing, as seeing the masked man actually repositioned himself in the air without anything to support on. It felt so unreal and magical.

Ye Chong on top of the mech's shoulder gave a cold gaze to the ground. The street became silent. Sang Ling and the others hopped onto the rooftop of the stores nearby.

Is he going to announce something? Speculated one man in his mind, as he lifted his head up high.

Under such a massive crowd of more than thousands, Ye Chong did something spectacular.

He took a deep breath, he turned to the head of the mech. He raised his leg. Wham! He gave a kick right onto the cheek.

The heck is wrong with him? That's a mech you know! People shrieked, their eyes went wide like saucers.

It's made out of metal, alloys! No matter how sturdy one's body

is, it's still made out of flesh! He's injuri-Wait, what?!

Crack.

Thup.

The sound had just shattered reality for everyone.

The cheek of the mech began cracking, then it got chipped off, and it fell onto the ground.

The men just witnessed a piece of alloy irregularly scrapped off from a mech with a kick.

The remaining specks of the spider-web crack Ye Chong created fell along.

The entire surface of the cheek was destroyed, revealing the circuits inside.

The street was dead silent.

...

... ..

... ..

"Oh my gosh! My mech! My precious!! You monster!" The man ran towards his mech after his brain rebooted from the major crash of reality. He would love to slice that b*stard into a thousand pieces but that person had vanished by the time he got to the front.

The people were overwhelmed, as they set into another round of fiasco, trying to understand what had just happened.

An ultimate warrior had just appeared out of nowhere, as he shattered the entire piece of alloy barehanded after setting off a threatening scream with his disciplined teammates of twenty, demonstrating inhuman airtime under their masks of no expression.

The summary stormed upon the entire Guilar city.

Residents of He Yue galaxy adored the strength, the martial arts.

Those who wielded great strength would no doubt be the idol of many, not to mention real inhuman one like the masked man. It had become a tradition, as everyone disregarding gender, age or sexual orientation, would be required to learn combats since young, as long as they were healthy.

It was as if Guilar City was not chaotic enough with its scattered forces intertwining each other, now there was a new masked force, the situation would be more shaky than ever.

...

Sigh.

Ye Chong was moving... awkwardly. His left foot was naked. Well, thanks to his dramatic kick, the boot could not withstand the force he exerted and just burst like a balloon, even the corner of his pants got torn by the splinters of his boot.

This was another addition to his script he was helpless on. He just wanted to go back to the hotel but things just had to happen. It was as if a mischief from the author to keep him running, when would he ever have the day to settle down and run a noodle store like Grandpa Qian? It was yet another hectic beginning of his runaway, luckily he remembered the shockwave move Shang taught him before. It did not particularly create a real shockwave to drive opponents away, but at least, "It would impose a threat to the fear of the people naturally, once they recognized a greater force was before them. If you demonstrated enough strength from this, it would be as easy as philosophy."

That was why Ye Chong picked the shockwave approach, the surprise was, he never expected the Sangs to join the round. It looked like the scream was not exclusive to the Lan family of September after all. The "Mortal Roar" required extremely expert control over the muscular system as the user would perform dramatic vibration with every piece of muscle deep inside the throat to force the greatest amount of volume.

And Sang actually knew that. Wow... The Aristocrat was sure something deep and profound to be ventured.

Tanimatsu's black eyes shone with worship looking at Ye Chong. Guo and Hai Lian also joined the fandom of submissive respect. Sang Fan and the rest did not feel anything particular though. They had ample experience seeing sir in action, so they knew how far sir could go. Smashing a piece of alloy was nothing new. In Archipelago, the beasts had a way tougher skin than that piece of alloy. Moreover with the reinforcement on their strength via gravity training, their physique was not entirely shabby compared to Ye Chong. In the Sang Family, all were the martial arts elites, nothing new, nothing surprisingly, they did not respect sir for his strength.

But well, under such drastic situation, sir actually was able to come up with such brilliant plan that resolved the issue flawlessly. That was something, as expected from master.

The strength Ye Chong demonstrated was nothing in the eyes of Sangs, but something in the eyes of folks like Hai Lian and those men on the street.

Similarly, the "plan" Ye Chong came up with, was nothing brilliant to educated and strategic folks like Hai Lian and Guo. But it was brilliant to the Sangs.

The Sangs did not admire the strength but the folks did.

The folks did not admire the strategy but the Sangs did.

People would always admire the same person for different quality.

So kids, if you want to live great in this world, you have to have a balance of everything.

Chapter 299: Child's Play

Feng Su on her chair, was zoning out, with Rui Bing resting quietly on the bed nearby. Her move worked flawlessly, which normally should leave the opponent in deep sleep for few hours, unless there was external interference to wake her up immediately. Feng Su never failed to knock her foe out with this technique.

Though... why did the head call? What did the head call her for? It was like the first time she was recalled ever since she was assigned to the Sanctuary in the 5 major galaxies.

And she had already been traveling to He Yue galaxy for the past week. It was tormenting to force herself confined on the seat for the past few days. Her vitality was helpful but did not seem to be helpful enough on this long-term travel. The way from 5 major galaxies to He Yue was winding, long and complicating, it was nearly impossible to perform a space warp to save their time. They were forced to travel the traditional way in the end.

"You have arrived at : He Yue Galaxy."

The moment she heard the system notification, she sighed deeply. The pathway there was not as treacherous as one was informed, there was not many accidents reported, but well assuming if any were to happen, she would be too helpless to do a thing. Say if they hit a black hole for example, she would be directly visiting the death. Humanity... was still that minuscule figure in front of the vast, boundless galaxy.

She was piloting a processed model of miniature spaceship, which its structure had been reinforced. Well, the bulkier the spaceship, the less likely it would be comfy. Feng Su always heard whines and wails coming from every passenger who once hopped on that flying armor. The clan would even proudly bestow it the name "Flying Can", despite its superior performance. The speed

was great, the handle was too, the turning ability was very active, the mech was even installed with a powerful processor too. One could basically switch to auto-pilot mode in a safe area.

The spaceship was also supplied with nutrition capsules, tons of them, sufficient to sustain a long-term flight. It was not armed with any weaponry however, one could imagine a flying armor with superior defense but zero attack.

And certainly the miniature spaceship could not perform space warp. She had to first travel to Halo Jade, a planet which one of the clan's base located, to transit to a more advanced model of spaceship in order to get back to HQ.

The current progress... she was near Lunaris... It seemed like she still had to travel for quite some time. Lunaris... it brought back memories, she knew it was a planet of black market, and to be frank, she had been frequenting the place before she was assigned to 5 major galaxies, since it was fun shopping there - you could always be surprised when you shop. Only if she was not traveling by under an order of the head, or she would have stopped by. Sigh, she got to return to HQ as soon as possible.

So what exactly had happened in our clan? Thought she, the suspense scorched her heart.

Jeez, no point being impatient now, hold your steer, Feng Su. A tease to herself, she made a stretch, flaunting one split second of her figure. It was absolutely a kind of torture to travel this far, and she was doing it alone.

At that one second, she felt her waist stiffened. She flinched, while her expression was still, as the ace pilot of the clan she had seen way too much death than risk, so she stayed calm.

Who was that?

An icy-looking face swirled upon her, expressionlessly

Impossible! Shrieked Feng Su in her mind, how did she wake up?

This had never happened before! She should have been unconscious! And without our unique technique to stimulate her spine, she would not even lift her eyelids!

"Who are you? Why did you do that to me? Where do you want to bring me to?" asked Rui Bing coldly. Her eyes were caught on Feng Su's appearance, that beauty, one has got to admit that it would attract anyone from all walks of life, and she looked far more superior than Rui Bing with those dreamy eyes of hers.

Feng Su ran her schemata in lightning speed. The girl was something, although she had no idea how the girl woke up in the first place, she knew she was doing it right and her move should have left her unconscious at a 100% success rate. Well then, that means the girl probably had some strange abilities to help her break out of the sleeping spell!

Practically, Rui Bing was already at a level of Jie expert by then, while her family's martial arts techniques had always been as incomprehensible to the outside.

"Yikes~~" Feng Su's face twisted, as sweat dripped over her chin, looking pitiful.

"Save your cheap acting. It doesn't work for me," said Rui Bing flatly. Rui Bing knew her strength, and her level of control over it, it would be a joke if a Jie expert like her did not know how to exert the right amount of strength to alarm and not to hurt their opponent.

Rui Bing was firm, and once she got firm, nothing will ever shake her, even when a beautiful lady was wailing in great pain.

"If you like to act so much, just keep acting like someone would care," stated Rui Bing. She took a glance around, and found the shower room. She might be a Jie expert, but she was still a hygienically sensitive lady herself.

She went into the shower room. Tick! Splash... Hush huuussh...

Feng Su withdrew her acting and was feeling wry of the girl. She sure was something. Feng Su had cheated countless men and women with her acting before this. Anyone would have their heart melted the moment they see such a gorgeous woman moaning in pain, like there was once the guardsman of the foe even untied her to check if there was something wrong. She thought it would work always, till she met Rui Bing, who gave total ignorance, rigidly like the ice, sternly like the storm.

The girl probably had used some kind of binding skill on her. Only if she was facing the one practitioner last time, who fell for her acting and cancelled the binding effect on her. But well, both the personality of the girl and the properties of her skill spelled bad news for Feng Su. She could do nothing else than moving her lips...

30 minutes lapsed and Rui Bing exited from the shower room, with her wet hair slanting over her shoulders and her fair white garb. She washed her white garb too?

"So why? Why did you knock me out?" Leisurely Rui Bing stated.

"I meant no harm. I just saw you practicing on your mech and looking really great. I thought of being your student but I fear you might refuse, so I eventually..." Pursing her lips, Feng Su was looking pitiful.

Rui Bing's face had an avalanche. It was rather common in her field. The mood of seeing an expert while being captivated by the expertise was the frequently occurred emotion in a fighter.

Haha! It worked. Stated Feng Su in her head as she saw the desired expression on her foe.

"I really meant no harm, sister... you are really great. I had never seen any female pilot who was able to perform such technique. Not even the men I supposed, those techniques are really hard to execute," exclaimed Feng Su from her heart, she was in fact surprised, the sisterly greeting was a technique to express respect

and favor to her foe.

The lifting voice was exerting some sort of magic, which made people friendly.

It would work even on a girl li-

"Hmph!" And it did not. Alarmed Feng Su.

She thought she had used her best technique, the manipulation of tone, an ability she obtained while she was in the disguise of the well-known singer in the 5 major galaxies. By altering the tone at specific syllable, it would create hallucination to manipulate the foes. Even the mentalist-pilots fell for her, their faces would blush, their controls would go wild. And with her appearance and this technique, of course she had an expansive career.

The girl was totally immune to her voice however, as if she was speaking normal. That was Feng Su's last resort... and it did not work.

That hmph from the foe was clearly a warning, Feng Su could hear it with her ears.

Rui Bing on the other hand was feeling irritated by this magical girl who kept withdrawing new tricks from her sleeves, that Rui Bing feared if she lost her focus for a sec she would be captivated.

"Okay, now I do not want to know anything," stated Rui Bing as she walked towards Feng Su, she rose her palm over the unwilling Feng Su, wham! A blow at the back of the neck. Feng Su fainted.

She lifted Feng Su and placed back onto the bed. She should take around 20 days to wake up. Of course, if she was a Jie expert in dark, it would be less than 10 days she supposed. Though Rui Bing could determine this lady to be rather skillful at combats, she was still nothing close to Jie expertise.

Rui Bing walked towards the control panel and tried pushing buttons sluggishly. Her mind would utterly blank out in the past if she was pushed to a control panel but now she already had the

basic idea of mech piloting, that she at least could speculate certain functions on the control panel of the spaceship.

She first prompted the intergalactic map and was stunned by their position. It appeared to be literally foreign to her that she could recognize none of the planets inside, not even a star. And she could not find any of the 5 major galaxies on it.

Where are we? Asked Rui Bing in her, as she glanced at the fainted Feng Su. Nope! She discarded the thought of waking that trickery up to inquire. She checked out the mileage, apparently they would be arriving at Lunaris in a day or so at full speed. Based on the marks on the map, Lunaris was a planet inhabited with humans. Okay then... she tapped the screen and maintained the course.

As long as we have someone there, things would get sorted out themselves.

...

A day passed and they arrived at Lunaris. Rui Bing repositioned the spaceship to fly low and started seeing the scenery on the ground clearly.

The spaceship decelerated and landed on an isolated valley, particularly the shadow of the cliff, so no one would notice it at first glance.

She went up a slope and looked back at the valley, she smiled. Okay, it is invisible, good.

She walked on, since her mech was no longer around she could only rely on her feet. But before leaving the spaceship, she did a few stuffs - she removed every part found on Feng Su, including the dimensional keystone and even the accessories, jewelries on her apparel. She also - since she could not discover any backup mech in the ship - removed the entire battery of the spaceship to prevent this trickery from causing her issues in case she woke up

early. She even broke the battery so the spaceship would be an empty can now.

She closed the gate of spaceship so it would be only possible to get out but not to get in, unless by a brutal force shattering the whole piece of armor of the spaceship. Well of course, even if Feng Su woke up and wanted to have a walk outside, it was not an easy task to open a heavy gate of a spaceship without electrical supply either.

Sadly, Rui Bing could not use the dimensional keystone she took from Feng Su, since it required the biological signal of the owner, unless Rui Bing murdered Feng Su... So this piece of keystone was technically a piece of garbage to her. She strolled to a rushing river and thup! She tossed all accessories into the river.

Nirvana was a sad case as it was thrown into the river like pebbles, despite its capabilities and superiority.

Take that! You trickery! Asserted Rui Bing, now that little bit of work would teach her some lesson. Rui Bing's cold face was melting into a naive joy of a little girl completing a big, big mission herself.

Little bit... of work? Wonder how Feng Su would explode when she knew how briefly this immature girl was thinking.

...

Ye Chong had already been in his room for the past 3 days. The model of mech he bought was placed on the desk, along with numerous tools scattered around.

The model of the mech was looks unrecognizable as the armor of its back was removed, revealing the refined build inside.

The development of mech industry... well there had been various theories on it, but one significant one stated that at one point, the mech development branched into two aspects - one was the mechanical mech, another would be the circuit mech.

Yes, the very first mech was wholly mechanical, which some would call the armor as "machine armor / mecha" and the pilot as "mechanics". This did not last however, as 300 years ago, after the advanced circuits were invented, the mechanical gearing was no longer heard, the capability of a traditional mech had undergone a transformation, a leap to a new reign, and that was when people finally called it as "mech" instead of "mecha".

And this very model, was the antique from the record of 350 years ago, when mechanical mech was at its prime. As limited by the technological standard at that period, it was unavoidable to not use a certain mechanism to make the machine armor even move. It sounded traditional yet it was innovative, breathtaking to the people that time.

In most men, this model would be merely an antique, an adornment, which might be occasionally useful in the eyes of the mech researchers. But this particularly item, was priceless in the eyes of Ye Chong.

It has been known that skeletons do not blend well with the electrical circuit - Ye Chong learned this fact painfully when he first developed skeleton parts. But after the visit at Sang family village, the Collision he created had brought him a new avenue to figure. As he lacked the conventional tools to produce the conventional mech, the Collision was his unconventional design, being the mechanical design itself. He was not expecting much from the mech in the beginning, till he saw the power of the Collision in the field.

It was more than sufficient in the hands of the Sangs, as they were able to perform outrageous movements on it. Their attacks were simple yet potent, which toppled Ye Chong's initial understanding on mech performance. It was an era he was in, which demanded more variation on the same move, the fancier the flashier the better, while denying the simple movements claiming them to be primitive and obsolete. Thanks to the Sangs, he saw

something new.

The catch was however, he had more intelligibility on circuits than mechanism, which led him this helpless situation at the desk, as if a game-stuck when you realized there was actually a hidden path in the loop of dungeons and you did not have the necessary gear to access it.

The model was precious in the eyes of Ye Chong because not only it retained the form of the ancient, it was also the prime form of the ancient. He hoped he could be inspired somehow as he analyzed its structure and designs.

Certainly, Ye Chong was astonished by the inside of the model the moment he removed the cover.

He had spent the next three days performing calculation. At least he was firm with his fundamentals, which greatly sped up his process of figuring out the working of the inside.

It was amazing. He concluded so as he recognized the wisdom of the ancients. The design looked ridiculous to layman but it turned out to be extremely clever, that Ye Chong felt his Collision was merely child's play, a poorly done treehouse by a 5-year-old.

He believed that modification on Collisions would possibly bring a few levels of elevation at least, after he had understood the structure of this model.

As he thought, his focus shifted back onto the model.

The model was reliably the exact downsized model of the actual piece. If Ye Chong had a shrinking machine he could literally get a soldier to pilot this and go for a miniature space war. And he also realized that it was not an easier task to build this thing as well since most parts were handmade rather than manufactured like most mechanical parts today.

It would take efforts and generous amount of time to build even a model like this.

But who, who would actually invest these to build this insignificant looking toy?

Compared to the 7 mechs lay inside the Sang Family Village 5 centuries ago, this was way more advanced, whether in the aspect of the design concept, the structure. It symbolized the prime of the mechanical mech era.

The problem was... there was so many things he had to learn. Other than the basics he knew nothing of mechanical mech, since as mentioned, the two aspects branched each's way earlier. It was two worlds for mechanical science and circuit science. Ye Chong had to unfold a journey in search of the mechanical theories.

A long, long way it was.

On the dimly lit desk, his face was determined, looking at the puzzle left by the past.

Chapter 300: The White Streak

Greda's heart flooded with spite, as few days ago he finally met a lovely lady which struck his heart hard, while being heavenly fortunately single and alone she seemed on the street. He was excited as he headed over, decided to tease her to grab her attention. No doubt, the lady, being as embarrassed and introverted she was, struggled with blushes and twists, which were the trigger to his libido. Gulp! He certainly enjoyed the catcher-and-catched game with pretty girls like her.

The downer was... spectators were gathering around him, like a real dramatic crowd of them where there were literally three circles surrounding the crime scene. The passersby knew who Greda was and of course they would not have the courage to interrupt his enjoyment. He was just surprised that his routine of flirtation was getting so much unnecessary attention.

He was in desire of withdrawing himself. Yes, he was the big guy in Guilar that no one would dare to offend thanks to his father, but anyone with a common sense would know that it was always a risky ride to tour in Guilar everyday, since you would never know what kind of hideous character hid in the crowd as you were teasing a fair lady at the roadside. Greda just feared his daily routine would become a tragedy that even his father would be unable to handle.

Greda was known as the man who was born with a silver spoon, he could have abused the rules using the name of his family but he, like all other Aristocratic members, held that caution to not breach the unwritten rule in the dark.

The situation was awkward, as it would be embarrassing to just eject himself from the place, he was bewitched by the lady too. "What the hell!" There was a loud curse coming from the crowd, with two waves of thunderous roar followed, which nearly frightened him to the ground.

Like seriously? Could human produce waves like this? Greda remained astonished even from reminiscing it. He was unaware of the happening till he was informed about the appearance of 20 Jie experts in the field. Perhaps... speculated he, the thunderous roar was from these 20 Jie experts who seemed to have caused more harm than hurt.

Well, those are some dorks. Who would want to pick a fight with Jie expert? Do they want to die? Commented Greda in disgrace regarding the victims. Sighs, and that was when the pretty girl disappeared from my sight. Life could not be perfect, couldn't it?

Greda's father knew his son well enough, that he employed a group of bodyguards for him, fearing that deafening news of his son's perish. Guilar forbade the flight of mechs, so these bodyguards all fought with fists and kicks rather than fancy gadgets.

And that was how Greda wrote a tale of him being the center of formation of a seeming gangster, as he strolled on the street. He lifted his steps proudly, knowing those truly the danger would not bother about him while the enemies he had made in the past would fear his father.

Sighs, it's life after all. I still could not forget that lady. I could not be bothered with the other ordinary girls on the street ever since. They were so ordinary while she... was otherworldly.

Wait what! Shocked Greda was, as he jerked his step in front of a hotel.

Was the God sympathizing me? His heart raced seeing that one lady. He had viewed countless women but this particular one made his heart race faster than ever. Was she the goddess? The goddess of Venus? The epitome of beauty itself?

About 20 meters in front, a slender silhouette was swinging the curve left to right, with the fine face leaning back and fro - an adorable treat to his eyes...

The hair was glossing as expressively as her eyes, telling a saddening tale he would love to know.

Such naivety! His heart felt hammered.

And that girl was walking towards him, oh, that girl of his memory, of his thoughts day and night. She seemed troubled as ever! She did not notice Greda apparently!

Greda was overjoyed, he tried holding his horse as he signaled his men, who were well-aware of this young master's style. Stampede! Stampede! They marched to her and circled her.

"Oh?!" The girl returned from her mind wonderland as she was shocked seeing Greda's face.

...

"Yawn..." Fifth floor of the hotel, few men were squatting near the window in daze. Sang Fan, Sang Tie, Hai Lan and Guo were having a men's talk to each other. They were absolutely bored, thanks to Ye Chong who seemed to have been engulfed by the room three days ago. They dared not to head out without his permission, since they did not have a proper task to work on either.

"You know those days, I actually hunted down a few Gigadas barehanded."

"Really? Man you're good, it took me forever to kill one... Could you teach me the trick to do it?"

"Well, you're still a boy, this is something only a man knows how."

"Hahaha..." Hai Lian was missing the good old-fashioned slice of life conversation...

"Wait."

"What are these men doing down there?" asked Sang Tie.

"What else?" Hai Lan gave a glance and replied in dismay,

"Flirting in public, duh?" Chatting with Sang Tie and Sang Fan was more consuming than he thought. Well if you were to chat with a bunch of butchers from the slaughterhouse you would feel the same too, the topic always revolved around "Battle", "Combats", "Slaughter", "Bloodshed", "How great their blows were". What? Slithering Steps? The conservation and utilization of momentum? Could anyone lend me a dictionary? I need subtitles here. Those gazes, would you stop looking at me and Guo like that? We aren't some ancient tribe who was born to kill animals to survive okay?

My He Yue galaxy, who would dare to challenge insanity like both of you? Cursed Hai Lan in his mind. Oh wait, I should lecture them something on life as well. "So... ever heard of Hitting the Home Run? No it's not about you running back to home!" You could at least say if it was a baseball term, but that's not what I meant! You guys are cavemen for quite a reason I see... "Playboys? Ever tried one?" Tsk, tsk, what happened to good old elementary culture of life? You don't even know the famous brand? "Okay, okay, how about Tomcats?" Added Guo, "It's famous you should have watch-No? You guys never watched it?" Get a life man! Hai Lian and Guo joined forces and hurled back insults at the two Sangs.

"Fine." Concluded that conversation, "So could both of you tell me, what 'flirting' is?" Sang Tie looked confused.

How in the He Yue do I explain you the terms without getting the hideous **xplanation censored? See they even censored hideous' --- explanation! No I do not intend to type the naughty word!

"Hmph." Sang Fan gave a disdainful remark, "Such tiny circle yet they actually have 3 major loopholes there, look, my brother, those incompetent fighters there."

Hai Lian somehow saw Guo nearly falling out of the window...

Certainly Greda was unaware of the 4 uninvited guests on top. He would not care too.

"Such fateful encounter! We are still fateful entities I see! The fate between you and I had been determined in our past life." A passionate pick-up line from Greda.

"Shush!" The four men on top shuddered harsh, as Sang Tie looked at Sang Fan in fear, "Don't tell me that you said the same thing when you confessed to Ling..."

The focus was on Sang Fan now and he was noticeably blushing even under that mask of his, "N...nope! Don't be ridiculous!"

Hai Lian and Guo were laughing mad after exchanging glance, "A-anyway!" Sang Fan quickly redirected their steed, "Who are those people down there? Especially that disgusting guy!"

"Greda," stated Guo, "the son of Jin Gui tribe, who seemed to have been enjoying flirtation with the authority of his father."

"Jin Gui?"

"Yes, I had heard things about the tribe," nodded Hai Lan. "They aren't as many as most tribes, but they were fortunate enough to start their family at a strategic location, which contained a rich source of Lithium Gold, they were as rich as you could ever imagine. And I heard about how men in the tribe are more passionate in relationship, that they would - with the strong sense of loyalty of theirs - fall in love with a woman once and only once in their entire life... although I was unconvinced upon seeing Greda, he was the exception, being the typical playboy around."

"Heh!" Guo added, "Every one of them was extremely wealthy, while being loyal in relationship, which made them the best bachelor for the unmarried women. There's even a saying, 'Don't work, don't hide, find a Jin Gui, you'll go sky high.' I guess the women would work their entire life hard enough to get the Jin Guis' attention."

"On the more serious note, the fighters of their tribe were very capable, known for their sturdiness and determination. I would

say that's annoying," elaborated Hai Lian.

"Hmmmmmm..." Both Sang Fan and Sang Tie were very intrigued. The moment when Hai Lan mentioned about the fighters got Sang Tie all pumped up, that he would love to jump right off the building and land with a taunt to fight.

But there was a plot twist to their script, as a new character came into the scene. It was another lady, around her early twenties, with a body of a well puberty, her short hair emphasized her character, the hook of her nose expressed indigenous pride.

"Greda. This lady is mine. Would you please excuse me?" Stated she.

"She Xin, I don't see the need of you in this." Greda, seemingly avoidant about this girl, replied.

"Why, why? Greda, can't even give your way to a lady?" She knew what kind of character Greda was, that he would not anger anyone he should not.

"Oh my great, great lady!" Shouted Greda, holding his hands courteously, "Of course I would give my way to a fair lady like yours. But I really love this pretty you have there, please, with your kindness, spare me. I would do whatever as you pleased."

Wow, did Greda really fall for this girl? Surprised Shi Xin was, since she was also well-aware of this playboy's well-doings around. He hardly had promises and now he actually makes one...

Shi Xin, hesitated, took a look at the girl behind her, who was in all fear, fright and surprise.

"Nope!" Declined Shi Xin right away. She just realized her response acted faster than her brain...

"Oh Shi Xin..." Responded Greda, his face darkened, "Are you sure you would not spare me for this?"

Okay, something was wrong. Sensed Shi Xin, "Greda, I guess you

know what could happen if you did something to our fellow Shi. Like how your father would see this for example..."

Greda could not care less, "Go! Get the girl!"

"TRY! If you want!!" Shouted Shi Xin as she guarded the girl behind, she could even sense the girl quivering. I must protect her - Shi Xin asserted to herself.

The men were stoned by her shout, being hesitant, "What's wrong? Now all of you are under her command eh?" Greda's tone was calm, yet cold, colder than the blizzard. The expressionless look was telling bloodthirstiness.

"Lady Shi! Our apology for this!" The guardsmen reluctantly seized the lady.

Seriously? I should have brought my own men too! At least I would not be the passive one here! Shi Xin was regretting...

The four men on top were still enjoying the show. Guo and Hai Lian had grown numb over this drama, as they had seen enough brothers of the Aristocratic families doing mischief everywhere on their will. Sang Tie and Sang Fan were new to this, that they were stunned, unable to comprehend even the words. Well, they did not have permission to move from the great sir either...

"Ahhhhh!" The clothes were torn...

"White Streak?!"

"The White Streak Tribe?"

In the midst of fight, the sleeve of the girl was torn, there revealing white streaks like the moon. Oh no! Panicked Shi Xin upon seeing this unfortunate addition to the setting. She shifted her eyes to Greda, I knew it! His eyes were shining bright! The White Streak tribe was known for their beautiful descendants, a treasure some men called them, that the owning these angels would be the most heavenly thing a man could ever do in his life. And the White Streak tribe suffered different tragic tales over their

beauty...

The white streaked lady was showing despair...

Hai Lian's body shuddered upon seeing the streaks, as he sprung from the ground, which shocked the fellow men near him. His eyes were changing...

Tick! He jumped off the window.

"Wow when did he get so brave?" muttered Sang Tie, they were five floor tall, any layman like Hai Lian would at least break a bone or two jumping down recklessly like that... The remaining three men stood up and watched in position. They would not move unless with order.

Thump! Hai Lian landed like a falling angel as he jumped off from a fifth floor. Of course he was not as overpowered as those Sangs who trained at 20 times heavier zone daily. The moment he landed, UGH, blood spilled from his lips.

The location he landed though, it was perfect, being right next to the poor girl.

He grabbed the girl without hesitation and did a quick tumble, breaking through the circle. The sudden change in situation confused everybody. They only understood the situation after the boy had left the scene.

"What the hell!" Greda's face was darker than abyss, as he was jumping mad.

Hai Lian did not wish to spare his potential last few moments of his life on viewing how the reaction of those men, he kept running with the lady in her embrace, all the way to the hotel.

"What the hell are you guys doing! Did my father pay you to just stand there? MOVE! UGHHH!" Shouted Greda, as the men hurried their ways towards Hai Lian. It would be embarrassing if the people outside knew they actually let a feeble lady out of their grip that easily!

Hai Lian ran madly, his eyes glued on that gate of the hotel.

Sang Tie was standing by the gate. Yes! I knew I have great brothers! Overjoyed Hai Lian was. The Sangs were short by nature, even Sang Tie the tallest with a height of 1.7 meter seemed like a potential dwarf actor in the crowd. However, when Sang Tie stood there, it just felt so reliable. When Hai Lian was getting to the entrance, Sang Tie tilted his body to the side and let the prince run in.

Thank you Through the mask, his eyes was expressing that countless appreciation while Sang Tie's eyes were firm, Hai Lian then rolled his way into the lobby.

Sang Tie repositioned himself to block the entrance. The bodyguards gradually slowed down upon seeing this strange masked man standing by the door.

The same mask! They were together! Speculated Greda right away. His usual self would not allow him to go further as he knew how deep and dangerous Guilar could get with unsightly men like these. His family, as well as himself, being the leading group in the town feared shady characters like this. How shady? Greda would say, anyone with a mask and an unknown identity would be the most dangerous as they hid themselves either because of their superhuman ability or because of their sensitive status in the society, none of these would be in the mess-with list of Greda.

But Greda had lost his usual self minutes ago. He felt he had saw the real nemesis of his life, "Move!" Ordered him to initiate a fight, he had lost his rationality.

Heh! Sang Tie gave a cold smile in his mask, if you want a fight, I'll give you a quick fight. It would be a sin if I alarmed sir for this.

Sang Fan was right behind and he knew what Sang Tie was thinking, "Remember to hold back, hurt them, don't kill them," he advised.

Sang Tie gave a nod of understanding. The group of bodyguards was swarming upon him, so he lifted his leg and prepare to deliver his soccer. kick.

Those men were still bodyguards, as they knew what awaited them, their expression changed and the leading one clumsily avoided those afterimages of Sang Tie's moving legs.

The guard fell to the side while Sang Tie maintained his left feet moving, lifted his right leg and whipped directly on the guard.

"Youchhh!" Shrieked the guard as being sent to the air and whammed upon the crowd behind.

The crowd collapsed.

People were gasping.

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